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A HANDBOOK OF  
SALT-WATER FISHING



# A HANDBOOK OF SALT-WATER FISHING

By O. H. P. RODMAN



*Illustrated by Marshall W. Joyce*

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
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Seventh Impression

*Printed in the United States of America*

DEDICATED  
TO  
MY FATHER

I quote him as follows:

*"You will find few real anglers in jail."*

IT WAS THROUGH HIS THOUGHTFUL INFLUENCE  
THAT THE WRITER HAD, AT AN EARLY AGE, THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO FULLY APPRECIATE THE IM-  
PORTANCE OF AN OUTDOOR HOBBY SUCH AS  
ANGLING.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR reference and corroboration of much of the material appearing in this book, the author wishes to list those publications consulted. By nature, this handbook is not complete for any who may wish to delve deeper into the entire story of the life history of any of the many salt-water species mentioned. We trust therefore that the list below will be of value to those who may wish to obtain more information.

<i>Publication</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>
Salt Water Angling	Van Campen Heilner	Knopf
Marine Game Fishes of The Pacific Coast	Lionel A. Walford	Univ. of California
Fishes	David Starr Jordan	Appleton
American Food and Game Fishes	Jordan and Evermann	Doubleday, Doran
The Salt Water An- gler	Leonard Hulit	Appleton
Big Game Fishes of The United States	C. F. Holder	Macmillan
Game Fish of the South	L. S. Caine	Houghton Mifflin
Salt Water Fishing Equipment	Harlan Major	Funk & Wagnall
Afield with Rod and Gun	Ray Camp	McGraw-Hill

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*Bulletins of the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries*  
*The Salt Water Sportsman*  
*Outdoors*



## INTRODUCTION

THIS book has been prepared in an attempt to fill a definite vacancy among the works on angling. Not that there are too few books on the subject—quite the opposite; rather is our purpose to bring together within the confines of two covers interesting facts that will not only mean reading enjoyment but also will help you more thoroughly and successfully to enjoy the age-old sport of fishing with rod and reel through the use of balanced tackle and through a closer acquaintance with the game species you seek.

In short, our attempt is not to impress you with what we *think* but to make available to you unbiased, unprejudiced *knowledge* on all North American salt-water game-fishing.

In selecting fish we have tried not to slight even the skate; we have included all fishes which afford pleasure to the millions of men, women, and children who constitute the growing salt-water fishing fraternity of North America.

Our single hope is that you enjoy this book and find it of frequent utility, whether you be an inexperienced or experienced devotee of rod and reel.



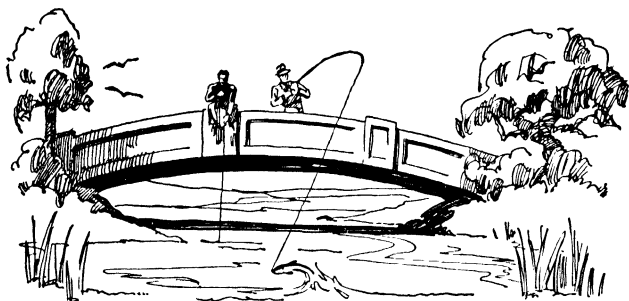
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A HANDBOOK OF  
SALT-WATER FISHING





## Chapter 1

### THE FRESH-WATER FISHERMAN TURNS TO THE SEA

NOT so many springs ago we happened to meet one of our most enthusiastic trout-fishing friends on the bank of a mutually favorite stream. A sudden burst of cold weather and heavy rains had put the fish down for the day, one of the reasons we both gave up fishing long enough to stop and chat. Among many other things which we discussed, the writer happened to mention that since the day was still young he expected to try a local tidal inlet to see if the first run of northbound striped bass had yet reached our mid New England shores.

“Striped bass?” asked our friend, with arched eyebrow. “Thought they only appeared in the

surf later in the year? Tell me more; I'm interested."

We told him "more." In fact, he went with us that afternoon, when with regular trout fly rods we took a half-dozen stripers averaging three to four pounds apiece. The marsh through which the tidal river ebbed and flowed was just turning that fresh green color of early spring. One of the bigger fish took a large maribou fly right in a foam-flecked eddy. A pair of mated black ducks made much ado when we came too near their nest. The redwing blackbirds sang their hearts out at sundown. It was a perfect afternoon—and a new salt-water fisherman was born.

This in itself was not an uncommon occurrence. In fact, we mention it here to point out the fact that fresh-water fishermen are turning their faces eastward to the Atlantic, westward to the Pacific or southward to the Gulf as the case may be. Of course, there are many reasons for the increase in salt-water sport-fishing devotees. One of these is the fact that some ten million fresh-water fishermen have exerted considerable pressure in many areas of these United States on the supply of fresh-water game-fish. We are not alarmists, and many states have done a remarkable job of keeping their lakes and streams well stocked with fish, but the fact does remain that



some sections have suffered to a point where fishing is merely a means to get outdoors and obtain some healthful exercise. And that is all right too—but it is nice to catch a few fish now and then.

Another most potent reason for the turn to the open sea, the white beaches and the green marshes, is the fascination which they intrinsically have. There's a feeling of freedom and expanse which calls a man back again and again. The setting is right, as is the atmosphere. Surely it is safe to say that the surroundings of the fishing spot have almost as much to do with the pleasure derived from a trip as does the sag of the creel. If you've never seen the terns wheeling and diving in an aerial attack upon small fry driven to the surface by a ravaging school of bluefish, if you've never felt the spray on your face as you ride out to the offshore fishing grounds; if you've never sat in a small rowboat in the dawn stillness of a marsh and fished with light tackle for flounders, snapper blues, striped bass or weaks and felt a part of the running tide, you've as great a joy in store for you as any fresh-water fishing could impart. If you are a pan-fisherman who likes to sit in your small boat or on the bank and watch for the bobber to dip, you'll find the counterpart of this in salt-water angling. If you are an ardent fly caster, your same tackle, minus only the dry flies, will

serve as a vibrating connecting link between you and the secrets of sea or marsh. Don't worry about having to leave your pet bait-casting rod at home, as there's use aplenty for it on salt-water gamesters which "pound for pound and inch for inch" will make you wonder why you have slighted them before.

If it's cost which is worrying you, and if you have some salt water as near to you as your fresh-water lake or stream, worry no more about the ability of your pocketbook to enable you to taste the pleasures of the sea; salt-water fishing is no more of a luxury from the expense standpoint than is fresh-water fishing. More about this later.

Perhaps you're tired of catching recently stocked six-inch brookies, or browns or rainbows. Possibly you have tired of tripping over old bicycle and automobile tires in that stretch of brook near home, or it may be that you have not had quite the old enthusiasm for that bass, perch, or pike lake which does not seem to yield the catches it did a few years ago. If such things are even partly true, we feel confident that you will more than enjoy the change to long stretches of white beach, a rocky promontory which juts out so that you can stand with only a ship or two between you and Spain, or a peaceful anchorage in the bay or open sea. Here you'll find an

atmosphere which is not lessened by the lack of NO FISHING signs.

Should you wonder about the type of fellows you'll meet along the shore—and you shouldn't think twice about it if you are an angler—we'll give you an example or two. More than once we've seen a surf caster give over his one extra pyramid sinker to an unfortunate chance acquaintance who had just lost a rig. Not infrequently has a salt-water angler loaned an extra reel to someone down the beach who, through some unforeseen disaster, needed a replacement. One incident of some years back always stuck in my memory. Three of us were trolling for small mackerel with light rigs using a small mackerel jig. Another boat, following the same beat along the edge of the same bar, was taking fish almost as fast as they could haul; we were taking one very infrequently. Our successful companions noticed our lack of luck and pulled up alongside to suggest that we hook on a small V of the white cloth which they generously tossed aboard. We followed their advice and started to take fish at once. Surely white cloth is cheap, but good fellowship like that is priceless! That is the type of companion you can look forward to encountering in the salt-water fishing fraternity.

And while we are on the subject of individ-

uals, we'd like to add a word of commendation for the boat captains and natives along our seacoasts. Many of them are men who have always depended on their knowledge of the unpredictable sea for their living, with the consequence that they know the habits of fish far better than many a sport fisherman. Make a point to know these men and heed their advice. They are stalwart citizens and good companions all. From the man who sells you bait, the man who will rent you a rowboat for all day at only \$1, up to the man who may be captain of a high-priced, deep-sea fishing cruiser, you can learn much that will mean more fun and more fish.

## BEGINNERS AND EXPERTS

The near-mythical man who will use only dry flies in a snowstorm on opening day of trout season when the flood-waters are running well over the banks is an established character in fresh-water angling. He is supposed to fish for nothing but the better class of game-fish and use no weapon mightier than a three or four ounce rod. He is reported to turn a ghastly stare upon the man who might suggest that he would catch more fish on a worm. We knew a person who claimed to be of this ilk; and what's more we went on a trout-fishing trip of a week's duration

with him in the Maine woods. He was a good fisherman and kept his score well up each day with those of us who stooped to streamers and wet flies. Each night he would find some occasion to mention his pair of matched fly rods which cost him an even \$150 for the brace. But withal he was a great guy and we liked him better each day.

Somehow when you fish and camp out with a man you have a chance to get as close to him as under any other circumstances imaginable. Each day we thought we saw a little of the veneer drop away—and the third day out we were sure of it. The program that day called for a trip in an outboard across two miles of lake; then a carry of canoe and motor across a fairly good trail two miles long; then another trip across a second lake; finally, a hike up along a wild brook that wound leisurely through a tamarack swamp which had never seen an axe or been marred by a trail. When we arrived at our fishing grounds, my friend carefully uncased and jointed his lighter rod of the pair and reached into one of the numerous pockets of his fishing jacket for his reel. His hand shifted to another pocket—then, more hurriedly, to a third and fourth. As his hands dropped empty to his sides, I realized what had happened. He had left his reel at the base camp. Of course we offered him ours and

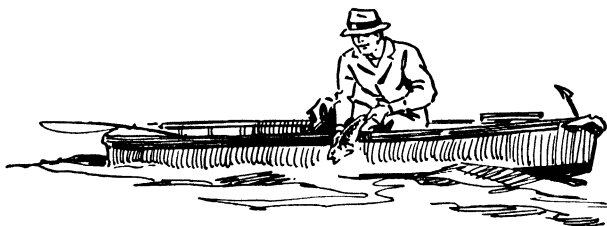
suggested that we take turns fishing. He would hear nothing of that. The June sun burned down. The black flies swarmed over every unprotected part of our hands and faces. Nevertheless, our friend managed to brave a smile and ask, "Have you by any chance a piece of line in your pocket?"

We had; an odd length of 12 thread cuttyhunk line which had found its way in among the other innumerable things that can accumulate in the capacious pockets of a fishing coat. And we stuck our tongue between our teeth and bit rather hard to keep a straight face when without more ado our companion tied one end of the cuttyhunk to the reel seat, strung the fifteen yards of it through the guides, bent on a leader, and asked if we had an extra streamer or wet fly. I'm not sure, but I believe that he had as much fun fishing that \$75 rod and *cuttyhunk line*—and taking his share of fish too—as he'd ever had.

All of which, you may well say, is far from the salt-water theme, but let us make our point clear. We know some salt-water fishermen who will try only one type of salt-water fishing. That is well and good, but their particular kind of fishing may last only two months out of the year. Even in the northerly section of New England, where the winters are long and severe, there is

fishing for a good variety of fish over a period of at least eight months if a man will vary his fishing. Maybe it is more fun to fish for striped bass, weakfish or channel bass; but when they are not running, don't forget that the lowly flounder will give you a good tussle on light tackle and will fry up into as good a morsel as was ever set on chinaware. Trite though it may be, the old adage which makes "variety" synonymous with "the spice of life" can well be applied to salt-water fishing.

But just as there are those who will not switch their affections and attentions from the more regal tuna or stripers or channel bass, there are others who miss just as much by not going after anything but the cod and flounder. Whether you live in Frisco, Corpus Christi, Miami, or Cape Cod, there is a variety of fishing in the sea which is yours for the taking. We are not trying to tell you which fishing you should enjoy; rather do we wish to merely point out that there's plenty of room for experimentation. So, if you are a handliner, why not give the rod-and-reel angle a try. Modern manufacture has brought the prices of salt-water tackle down to within easy reach of the average man so there's no reason why he shouldn't find out the extra thrills of rod and reel.



## Chapter 2

### KNOWING YOUR GAME-FISH

#### AND WHAT TACKLE TO USE

**K**NOWING the habits of fish is in itself a pastime of a high degree. Acquaintance with the range, food and habits of game-fish is a decided help in making a day's fishing the materialization of a hope rather than an unlooked-for disappointment. The brief sketches of the following species merely touch on the high spots, having been confined to the more important facts which should be of interest and aid to every angler.

In this chapter, following the description of each fish, the method of capture is noted and the appropriate tackle to be used. These notes endeavor to give a concise, correct and understandable outline of the essential tackle for the various salt-water game-fishes of North America. Where the tackle is specified simply as "3/6



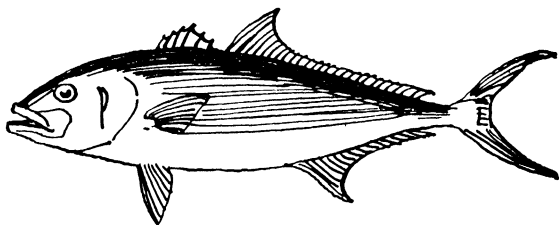
Outfit," "6/9 Outfit," etc., the reader is referred to the description of these "average" salt-water tackles given at the end of the chapter (p. 82).

Suggestions on the care of tackle and equipment are included in Chapter 8.

Every angler of experience has his own idea on the "exact" tackle for each particular fish. There is no desire to contradict these anglers; rather do we wish to *suggest* equipment which we have found very suitable for both expert and beginner, tackle which will make fishing a real pleasure instead of a problem. Good tackle, *tackle which balances*, is absolutely necessary to to get the fullest enjoyment from angling.

The following tackle outlines have been prompted by too frequently finding beginners outfitted with impossible equipment: fly lines too light to develop the power of the rod being used, so that even a professional would wrap each cast around his own neck; soft-pine boat rods which snapped like a match on the first fish hooked; 24 thread line on a surf reel, plus a one-ounce feather jig which had been sold to a novice in surf casting as "just the thing"; and even a soggy, clinging, soft-braided, untreated silk line. With such gear no man ever had a chance to enjoy angling. We recommend the following tackle combinations as practical and efficient. And the lighter the tackle the better the sport.

## Eastern and Western Game Fish



**PACIFIC AMBERJACK**  
(*Seriola colburni*)

**Other names:** Turel, toro, bull yellowtail, cohalla, turel de Castilla.

**Range:** From Cape San Lucas, through Gulf of California and south along Mexican coast.

**Habits:** Feeds on various small fishes, mollusks, crabs, shrimps, and other crustaceans. Differentiated from yellowtail by bronze color and absence of marked yellow stripe along the sides; runs heavier than the yellowtail. Known to science only since 1938, hence many facts concerning its habits, etc. as yet unknown. Apparently feeds on bottom a good deal.

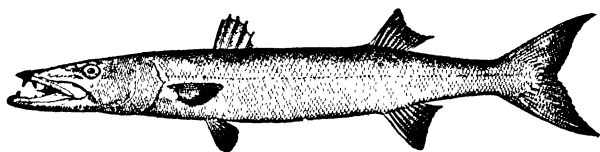
**Season:** April to June.

**Method:** Methods and tackle similar to fishing for yellowtail. (Generally troll a bit more slowly.) Also can be taken on cut bait while stillfishing.

**Food value:** Good.

**Size, and record fish on tackle:** 25 to 35 pounders fairly common; largest specimens about 112 lbs.

**Note:** For tackle, see Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77).

**CALIFORNIA BARRACUDA**

(*Sphyræna argentea*)

**Other names:** None.

**Range:** From Puget Sound to Cape San Lucas and Gulf of California.

**Habits:** Like many other sea fishes, the barracuda of the Pacific seems to go into deeper water in the fall of the year. Off Mexican coast all year round; best time on the U. S. coast is during the summer months. Schools appear along California coast starting about March. Very popular among anglers during summer. Spawns in May and June.

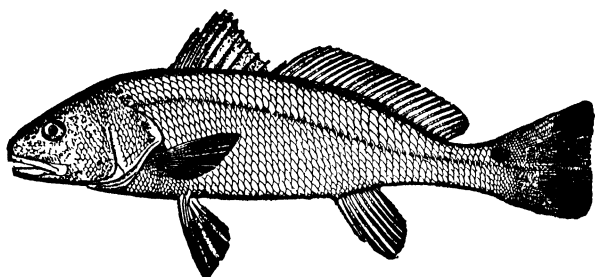
**Season:** Spring and summer months best.

**Method:** Greedy biters more often taken on live bait and jigging metal squid than trolling.

**Food value:** Good.

**Size:** Uncommon to find them more than 10 lbs. Record unknown.

**Note:** For tackle, see 3/6 Tackle under Average Tackle Specifications.



### CHANNEL BASS

(*Sciænops ocellatus*)

**Other names:** Red fish (the name Red Drum is a misnomer), red bass, reef bass.

**Range:** Atlantic Coast: New York to Florida. Gulf Coast: Florida to Texas. Also Panama and the Caribbean.

**Habits:** Member of Croaker family. Commands the very highest respect among anglers. Feeds on smaller fish such as menhaden, also shedder crabs, mullet clams and squids. Bigger fish usually taken in the surf. Frequents deep cuts along beach to inlets, river mouths and bays. Takes bait gently at first, evidently mouthing it, then starts to swim off with it—this last movement is proper time to set hook. Distinguishable from drum by a black spot at base of the tail.

**Season, time, place, tide:** June to October 1st—North Atlantic; October to February—Florida and Gulf, with some fish being taken the year round. Any hour of day or night, generally best on turn from high to ebb and early flood. Deep cuts along beach; along edge of bars. Atlantic and Gulf

Coasts—New York to Texas. New Jersey, Virginia and North Carolina beaches most famous.

**Method:** Surf casting, allowing bait to rest on bottom and move it a few feet occasionally. Also casting from boat.

**Food value:** Excellent and in great demand at most fashionable hotels, etc. Fillet and fry; also delicious when baked.

**Size, and record fish on tackle:** Average 10 to 20 lbs. Record 75½ lbs., Cape Hatteras, N. C., 1941.

#### EQUIPMENT FOR CHANNEL BASS

**Rod:** Regulation surf rod 9 to 15 oz., tip as for striped bass. Large agate guides and tip; double set of guides unnecessary.

**Reel:** 2/0 or 3/0 size holding 200 to 300 yards of line.

**Line:** 6 to 18 thread (18 to 54 lb. dry test respectively) cuttyhunk. Dry out after each trip and your line will give longer service.

**Hook:** O'Shaughnessy 6/0 to 8/0. This fish has tremendous power in jaws—do not use cheap hooks. It will mean lost fish.

**Bait:** Menhaden, shedder crabs, clams, squids (ink-fish). Use generous-sized bait. Examine frequently to see that pests have not spoiled its appearance. Also take artificial lures occasionally (feather jigs, etc.).

**Leader:** No. 9 wire—12 to 18 inches long with swivel at line end; or 4 ply gut if sharks and bluefish are not around.

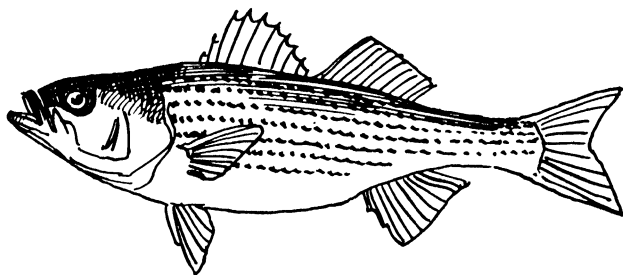
**Sinker:** Pyramid shape best—3 to 5 oz.

**Rod-butt rest:** Very necessary for physical comfort and leverage when playing fish.

**Sand spike:** See Striped Bass. If fishing from beach, this rod holder will be found of real value, to rest from constant holding of rod. Also to hold rod while baiting up or changing end tackle.

**Footwear:** Hip-boots or waders if surf casting; low moccasins or canvas sport shoes if from boat; sneakers.

**Note:** Channel bass a bottom feeder mainly; usually mouths bait before really taking it. One of the most popular surf fishes.



### STRIPED BASS

(*Morone saxatilis*)

**Other names:** Squid-hound bass, striper, rockfish, greenhead, lineside.

**Range:** Atlantic Coast: St. Lawrence to Florida; Pacific Coast: California north to Oregon (introduced 1879 and again in 1882—only about

400 fish, yearlings; within 20 years the commercial catch approximated 1,000,000 lbs.). Best fishing from Cape Cod to Florida in the Atlantic; Pacific: mainly in waters, (sloughs, bays, beaches) adjacent to San Francisco. No stripers off Southern California.

**Habits:** Belongs to Perch family. Strikes savagely and one of the gamiest fighters of the surf and inlets. Listed by some of America's foremost fishermen as "first" in salt-water game-fishes. First run is usually longest. Comes into harbors and bays to spawn in spring of year and remains along coast of New England until last of October. Can be caught from beach or in rivers. Also found off rocky promontories. Feeds on sand-eels, shedder crabs, squids, sardines, blood-worms, shellfish and small fish. Anadromous, living in brackish or salt water and ascending to fresh water to spawn. This fish, although introduced in Pacific waters, has multiplied and increased until it commands as much attention in California as along the Atlantic Coast, where it is native. Climate may be reason.

**Season; time, place, tide:** May 1st to November 15th—Florida to New Brunswick. May 1st to November 15th—California. Tide varies according to locality and type of fishing; can be taken at all stages in some locations.

**Method:** Stillfishing, trolling along coast and in bays, harbors, inlets fairly close to shore. Surf casting from beach. Day or night—latter generally considered best, especially in hot summer months.

**Food value:** Excellent—flakes like halibut. Fry small ones; bake or broil any over 10 lbs. for best flavor.

**Size, and record fish on tackle:** Average: in surf: 10 to 40 lbs.; in inlets, bays, rivers: 2 to 15 lbs.  
Record 73 lbs., Vineyard Sound, Mass., 1913.

**Note:** Record cast with surf rod is 660 feet, 3 inches.

### EQUIPMENT FOR STRIPED BASS

**Rod:** Regulation surf rod with 6, 6½ or 7 foot one-piece bamboo tip. Used with 30 inch spring butt gives you a rod 8 feet, 6 inches; 9 feet; or 9 feet, 6 inches, respectively. Seven foot tip is generally conceded to be most popular, allowing more distance in casting out into surf. Tip runs from 9 to 15 oz. The latter is best if you are going to use fairly heavy end tackle such as 4 oz. sinker. Large agate top guides for least friction and least wear on line. Guides on one side of rod are sufficient. Some use wood rods such as lancewood, hickory, and green heart and claim them very satisfactory. Good serviceable rods cost from \$10 to \$50. Short anglers should use shorter tips; tall men, longer tips. Longer, lighter and whippier rods best for squidding. This equipment is for surf fishing; for trolling equipment see Chapter 5.

**Reel:** Of good grade—cost from \$6 up. Must stand a lot of wear. Capacity should be not less than 200 yards of 9 thread; 300 yards is better (bass make a long run immediately when hooked). Should be equipped with leather thumb-brake or star drag, and free spool.

**Line:** 6, 9, 12 and 15 thread cuttyhunk. Exact size of line depends on action of rod, skill of angler, and weight of tip. Fishing end wears quickly—test before each fishing trip. Use heavier line if fishing around rocks. Wet down line before trying to make long casts.



**Hook:** 5/0 to 8/0 O'Shaughnessy. Stripers have a big mouth.

**Gaff:** Not entirely necessary on sloping sandy beach; if fishing from rocks, boat or stand where the fish has to be lifted straight up out of the water it is necessary and will save many a fish which would otherwise be lost.

**Bait or lure:** Early in season—bloodworms; smooth-running spinner trolled slowly baited with bloodworms; eel trolled; piece of lobster, size of walnut; herring. Later in season—shedder crab, shrimp, skimmer clam, live mackerel (tinkers), menhaden, squid. In the autumn—mullet; metal squid and feather jigs, trolled over feeding grounds; fresh or frozen squid; eel skins pulled over metal squid also good; live minnows; drone spoon. Chumming with ground bait important to create slick on water and draw fish. Piece of mackerel, herring, menhaden or squid à la Newport. Note: A 2 in. triangular piece of red or blue cloth or flannel, or pork rind, on end of metal squid makes it more effective.

**Leader:** 4 ply gut, brass swivel attached. Also bronze or piano wire—latter best. However, watch for rust spots, which mean weakness. Length—8 to 12 inches for surf casting. Three feet or more for trolling. Must have swivel between line and leader.

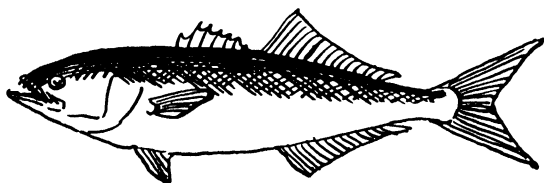
**Sinker:** For bait fishing—pyramid shaped to hold in the sand against the drag of the tide and surf; weight 3 to 5 oz. Cone shape also good. Floating bait often used off rocky promontories—no sinker in this case.

**Rod-butt rest:** A leather belt with a pocket to hold rod butt. Prevents bruising stomach with butt of rod; allows better leverage when fighting fish.

**Sand spike:** Like a hollow pipe, sharpened at one end to stick in sand and act as holder for rod. Never place rod and reel on sand.

**Carborundum stone:** Pocket size (about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. long, 1 in. wide and  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick) to sharpen point of hook occasionally. Or a special hook stone. A sharp hook catches more fish; a sharp knife eases the task of fish-cleaning.

**Notes:** Bass will bite day or night. In the early frosty nights of October they seem to be particularly active and bite well along the Atlantic Coast. Have been taken on streamer flies; also on wooden plugs—the red head and white body seems to be a favorite. New artificial lures are being invented daily. Plenty of room here for experimentation.



## BLUEFISH

(*Pomatomus saltatrix*)

**Other names:** Tailor, snapper, fatback, skipjack, snapper blue.

**Range:** Atlantic Ocean: South America to Massachusetts. Particularly abundant off New Jersey, Virginia and Carolinas.

**Habits:** Pelagic; travel in schools and are terrific eaters, often slashing schools of smaller fish such

as menhaden to bits, stuffing themselves to the limit. Hard fighters on rod and reel. Take a swiftly moving lure (metal squid, spoon, feather jigs) best. Feed on herring, menhaden, shedder crabs, squids, etc.

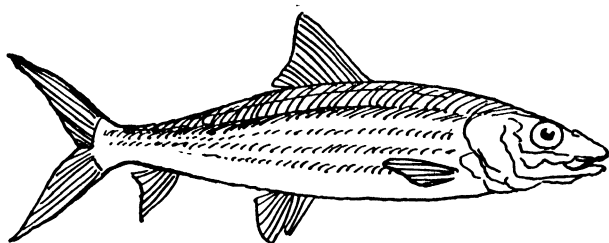
**Season, time, place, tide:** July, August and September, earlier in southern Atlantic. Incoming tide best. Often come well inshore as well as into deeper waters of offshore banks.

**Method:** Surf casting or trolling. Also anchor and chum with ground menhaden. Once you hook a fish, keep him coming as he will break water and jump constantly. A slack line is absolutely fatal.

**Food value:** Excellent. Bake or broil any over 4 lbs. Fry smaller ones.

**Size, and record:** Average 5 to 12 lbs. Record 25 lbs., Cohasset Narrows, Mass., 1874.

**Note:** For tackle, see Striped Bass if surf casting; if trolling use 6/9 outfit, see Average Tackle Specifications (page 82).



**BONEFISH**  
(*Albula vulpes*)

**Other names:** Lady fish; banana fish. Often mistaken for the bony-fish or ten-pounder (*Elops saurus*).

**Range:** Along sandy coasts in all tropical seas. Northward on Pacific to San Diego. Flats around keys of Florida and also in Bahamas. Best season from May to early fall.

**Habits:** Bonefish exclusively bottom feeder. Shallow water during warmer months. Like the tarpon, it is a warm-water fish and disappears during colder months. Coppery silver color, darker on back, and irregular high markings on scales, forked tail. A most remarkable fighter; strike is an almost imperceptible lift of bait. But when hook is driven home, there's action aplenty. Fast as lightning. Feed standing on their heads, often with their tails out of water in shallows. Must be approached cautiously.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Summer months. On flats and banks, inshore bays, inlets, and in shallow water of Florida Keys and Bahamas. Found in water sometimes barely deep enough to cover dorsal fin. Best fishing is on flood tide, and on turn of high tide to ebb.

**Method:** Stillfishing. Boat must be moved cautiously as bonefish are very wary. Also may be taken by casting a fly.

**Food value:** Fair.

**Size, and record:** Runs to 4 or 5 lbs. as a rule, but occasionally up to 10 lbs. or more. Record 13 lbs. 12 oz., Bimini, Bahamas, 1919.

### EQUIPMENT FOR BONEFISH

**Rod:** In bait fishing, use the regulation 3/6 outfit. Rod complete not weighing over 6 oz.; should have agate guides. Various manufacturers put out special bonefish rods. Get the best, for this fish is a warrior of high repute. For fly fishing use a heavy trout rod (9 to 9½ feet, weight 5½ to 6 oz.)

**Reel:** Size 2/0 or 3/0, with or without drag. Must be of best grade to stand the frenzied lightning-like rushes of this fish. There are special reels for this fishing. Must have a capacity of 200 yards of 9 thread cuttyhunk line. Better yet to have 250 or 300 yards of line, as the bonefish makes terrific runs. If fly fishing, have plenty of 6 thread backing.

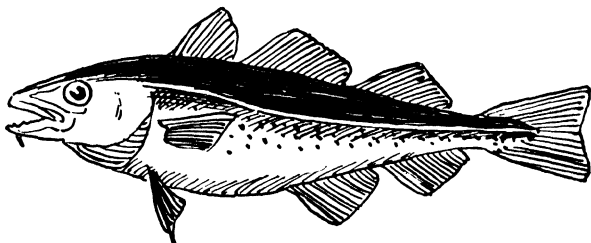
**Line:** From 6 to 9 thread. This should be color of bottom. A green line is highly recommended, also an olive-colored line. On clear bottom a tan line is excellent.

**Hook:** From 1/0 to 5/0. Special bonefish hook.

**Bait:** Crustacea of some kind—hermit crabs, sand fleas, cut crawfish, etc. Will take fly (Parmacheene Belle and Brown Hackle is good cast.)

**Leader:** 3 or 4 ply twisted gut.

**Note:** Good quantity of mosquito dope necessary at times.



### COMMON CODFISH

(*Gadus callarias*)

**Other names:** None.

**Range:** Probably as great as any fish; both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, from temperate zones to and including the Arctic Circle. Movements apparently from deep water to shallow and back rather than north and south like most fishes.

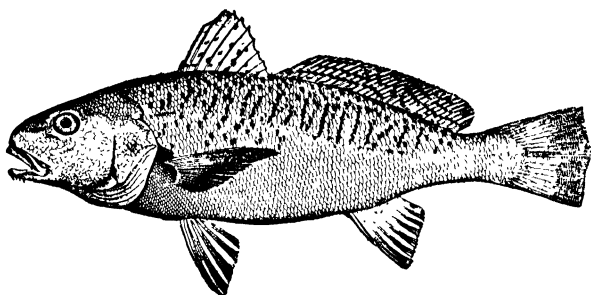
**Habits:** Tremendous feeders, biting practically anything from a herring to a whole clam, shell and all. Primarily a deep-water fish but taken on off-shore banks and inshore shoals.

**Season, time, place, tide:** All year round. Usually a deep-water fish, but moves inshore during late fall and winter months, very frequently within rowing distance. Any tide offshore; incoming tide best when taken inshore.

**Method:** Handlining; also rod and reel when in shallow water.

**Food value:** Very high, representing a substantial part of the catch of the great commercial New England fishing fleets. Actually not very tasty, but its abundance has established it as a most common table fish for chowder, baked or fried fillets. (Over 16,000,000 pounds were brought into the Boston docks alone in 1936.)

**Note:** While not considered a game-fish by the rod and reel enthusiast, nevertheless the cod and his companion, the haddock, furnish thousands of handliners (and some rod and reelers) with sport during the entire year. Party boats carrying 50 to 100 fishermen to the offshore banks for codfish are common. The long line and heavy sinker necessary to get the lure to the bottom put this fish at a disadvantage, but he plays a very important part in the life of the man who rightfully enjoys a deep-sea boat trip and who does not have the price or the inclination to obtain a rod and reel. At least one party codfishing trip should be a part of every salt-water angler's experience. If you can get offshore with a commercial fisherman, don't miss the chance.



### CROAKER

(*Micropogon undulatus*)

**Other names:** Corvina, hard head, ronco, crocus.

**Range:** Both Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Cape Cod to Texas; most abundant from North Carolina southward.

**Habits:** Belongs to Drum family. On sand flats and shallow places. Does not range closely inshore; longer casts mean better luck. Prized by surf anglers. Takes bait with a rush. Does not run very large, but battles very gamely on light tackle. Obtains name from croaking sound.

**Season, time, place, tide:** July through October 15th approximately ebb tide. Almost entirely at night. Not as close to beach as striped bass; bottom feeder; prefers sandy or grassy bottom.

**Method:** Surf casting; leaving bait still on bottom.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size:** Larger fish about 5 lbs. Average 1 to 2 lbs. No official record.



## EQUIPMENT FOR CROAKER

**Rod:** Regulation surf split bamboo of lighter type: 9 to 12 oz. tip.

**Reel:** 1/0 or 2/0 size, free spool.

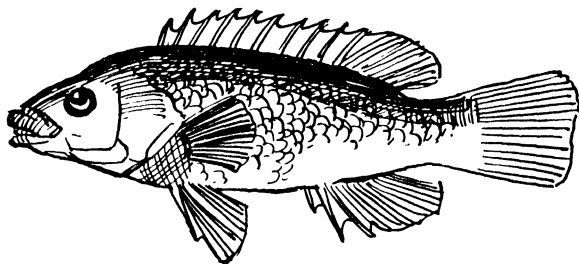
**Line:** 6, 9 or 12 thread cuttyhunk—150 yards.

**Hook:** About 3/0 O'Shaughnessy.

**Bait:** Shedder crabs, squids, skimmer clams, minnows, shrimps. Large baits not necessary.

**Leader:** Light tinned wire—about 1 foot really enough.

**Sinker:** 2 or 3 oz.; pyramid shape.



## CUNNER

(*Tautogolabrus adspersus*)

**Other names:** Chogset, sea perch, blue perch, bergall, bergylt.

**Range:** Labrador to Sandy Hook.

**Habits:** Belongs to Wrasse-fish family. Found close inshore as any tautog fisherman discovers, as the cunner is a great bait stealer. Also taken offshore. Particularly abundant along the New England shore, where they afford much amusement and many a meal.

**Season, time, place:** April to December; any time, any place, specially inshore rocks.

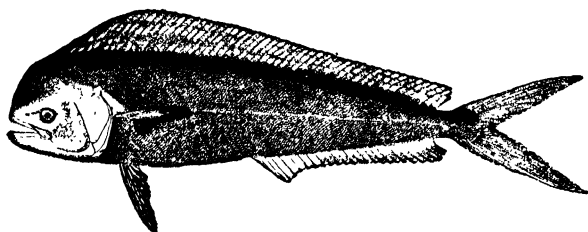
**Method:** Stillfishing near bottom.

**Food value:** Excellent, although often thrown away by tautog fishermen—that is, if the tautog are biting. Cunners running from 6 inches up should be skinned, rolled in flour or meal and fried quickly (and not too long) in deep fat.

**Size:** Maximum about one foot long, possibly 2 lbs. in weight.

#### EQUIPMENT FOR CUNNER

Any light tackle; use 1/0 hooks, light sinker, and clams or sea-worms for bait.



**COMMON DOLPHIN**  
(*Coryphæna hippurus*)

**Other names:** None known.

**Range:** Widely distributed throughout tropical and temperate seas. From Texas northward to New England. Feeds on smaller fish.

**Habits:** Pelagic—strong, fast swimmer. Beautifully colored.

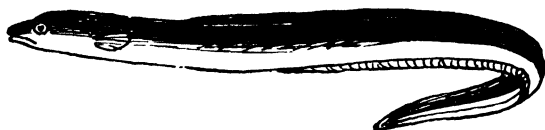
**Method:** Trolling offshore.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size:** Average from 4 lbs. up. Attains length of 6 feet.

**Record:** 67½ lbs., Waianae, Oahu, T. H., 1940.

**Note:** No tackle specifications given, as few anglers seek the dolphin of itself. Often taken while trolling in Gulf Stream for sailfish on medium trolling tackle as described under Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77).



## COMMON EEL

(*Anguilla rostrata*)

**Other names:** None known. Small eels are sometimes known as “elves”; and we’ve heard fishermen call the smaller ones “shoe strings.”

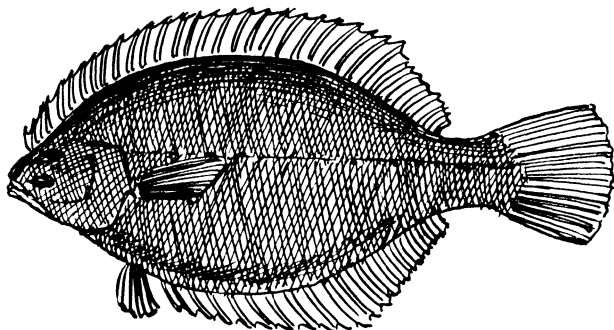
**Range:** All parts of the world except the Pacific Coast of North America, and the islands of the Pacific. Abundant in salt, brackish and fresh waters of the Atlantic Coast.

**Habits:** Of all the fishes of the world, the eel has probably kept more of its life habits to itself than any other fish. It was not until a comparatively few years ago that it was discovered that eels spawn in the warm Sargasso Sea, over 1,000 miles from the Atlantic Coast. Are bottom feeders and will take most any stale or dead bait, bits of fish, small dead minnows (the older the better), in fact most any kind of flesh, worms, etc.

**Food value:** Excellent. Many are prejudiced against the eel because of its snake-like appearance. But when thoroughly cleaned, fried in deep fat to a golden brown, the 3 or 4 inch cut sections are as good as most any fish that swims.

**Record:** None known.

**Note:** The eel is included in this book not to rank it as a game-fish, but because it does furnish a good meal to anglers; and the smaller ones are excellent striped-bass bait. Use a handline, small hooks (No. 6), and worms or small pieces of cut fish.



## SUMMER FLOUNDER

(*Paralichthys dentatus*)

**Other names:** Fluke, plaice.

**Range:** From Cape Cod to Carolinas; replaced by Southern Flounder from Charlestown southward through Gulf.

**Habits:** Usually found on sandy bottom, where they lie flattened into the sand with just their eyes protruding, but ever alert to grab a passing bait. Can move surprisingly fast. Common foods are squids, shrimps, small fish such as sand-cels, and crabs. Good fighters when taken on light tackle. Fish for them on or very near the bottom. The bigger ones are often taken while surf fishing along the coast of the middle states, and as far north as New England.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Inshore in surf or offshore on sandy bottom. May to November.

**Method:** Stillfishing and surf casting.

**Food value:** Excellent. One of the very best salt-water fishes. Commonly known in the fish market and home as fillet of sole. Sweet firm meat. Fry in hot deep fat.

**Record:** On rod and reel: 19 lbs., by Fred Foster on the banks off New York in 1895. By any method: 26 lbs.

### EQUIPMENT FOR FLOUNDER

#### Regulation surf rod, reel and line.

**Note:** Use 1/0 to 2/0 hooks with mummies (killies, minnies, hardheads,—preferably alive) or sperling for bait. Not infrequently they will strike metal squids or Japanese feathers. Green or shedder crabs, clams, bloodworms also good. If fishing with light tackle a very heavy fly rod, heavy trout leader, small sinker, and a float placed on the line so that the bait will be practically on bottom. Fluke will put up a great fight on such a light outfit. Let the cork float with the tide of current and pay out line so that the bait drifts along over the bottom. They prefer moving bait. A telescope steel rod will do, but be sure to oil it well after each trip, as salt water can rust and freeze a telescope rod. 9 thread line heavy enough.

### WINTER FLOUNDER

(*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*)

**Other names:** Flatfish, sand dab.

**Range:** From Maine to Florida, being more abundant from the Carolinas to northern Massachusetts. Early spring to late fall.

**Habits:** Muddy or sandy bottom preferred, and feeds almost entirely on bottom. Good biters.

**Season, time, place, tide:** From April to late fall in bays, inlets, tidal estuaries, etc. Incoming tide best.

**Method:** Stillfishing from boat, pier, bridge and jetty.

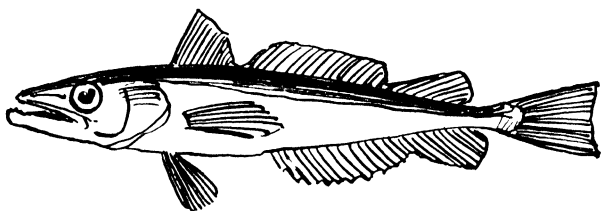
**Food value:** Excellent, although much smaller than the summer flounder or fluke. Fry—and not too long.

**Size, and record:** Average from  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to a top of about 4 lbs. Tackle record not known. Commercial record 4 lbs., with 6 lb. fish reported.

#### EQUIPMENT FOR WINTER FLOUNDER

Use a regulation  $5\frac{1}{2}$  foot light fresh-water bait-casting rod and reel, 6 thread cuttyhunk line, small trout hook, just enough sinker to get the bait to the bottom. Clam necks or bloodworms best bait and use small pieces as the winter flounder has a tiny mouth. Bite on most any tide.

**Note:** The winter and the summer flounders can be distinguished by the fact that the winter flounder has his eyes on the right while the summer flounder has his eyes on the left. In both fishes the side having that sandy color is on the same side as the eyes.



**SILVER HAKE**  
(*Merluccius bilinearis*)

**Other names:** Whiting, hake, New England hake.

**Range:** North Atlantic coast; abundant from Chesapeake to Maine.

**Habits:** Apparently spawn offshore in Gulf Stream. Taken along the New England shore during entire year in varying numbers. Of more importance as a food and commercial fish than as a sporting proposition, although they will take baits such as sand-eels, sperling, and even small-cut fish baits; also fight hard for a few minutes on light tackle.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Evening and night tides best; surf, jetties and bridges. Entire year. Peak from May through December.

**Method:** Stillfishing or fly casting.

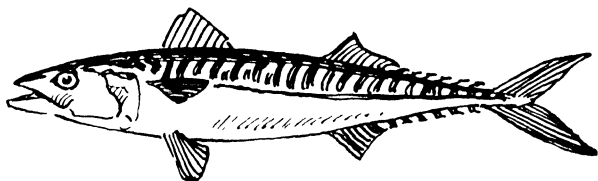
**Food value:** Flesh rather soft but in demand commercially. Rather tasteless. Fry for best flavor—and use as soon as possible after being caught, as they do not keep well.

**Note:** Another important species of whiting is *Mentieirrhus americanus*, found from the Carolinas to Texas, in the surf and inlets. Also called kingfish and sea mink. Use same tackle as below.



## EQUIPMENT FOR SILVER HAKE

**Tackle:** No separate tackle specifications given as any light fresh-water outfit will do. Use baits listed above. When feeding inshore they will strike a streamer fly savagely; for this type of fishing use a 9 foot steel or bamboo fly rod, (approx. weight  $5\frac{1}{2}$  oz.), HDH fly line with 50 yards of 6 thread backing, fly reel and streamer or bucktail flies to imitate sand-eels, small herring or other natural foods. Hook should be 1/0 or 2/0 O'Shaughnessy.



## COMMON MACKEREL

(*Scomber scombrus*)

**Other names:** Spikes (5 to 6 inches long); tinkers (under 9 inches, about 2 years old); blinkers (intermediate).

**Range:** Atlantic from Cape Hatteras to Nova Scotia; in European waters from Norway to Mediterranean and Adriatic.

**Habits:** Migratory; usually in large schools; faster swimmers, voracious eaters. Surface is sometimes lashed to silvery foam as a large school rushes through a school of bait fish. Feed on small crus-

taceans, small fish. Spawn during May, June and July, in deep water off Long Island to Gulf of St. Lawrence.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Offshore and bays at edge of bars. Late July to late September, most any tide or time.

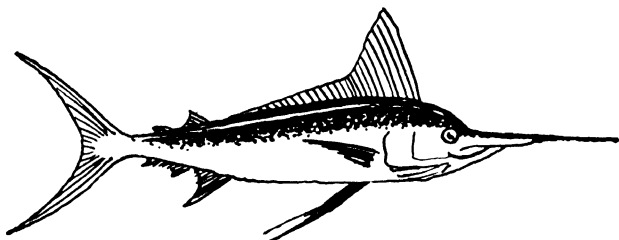
**Method:** Trolling with mackerel jig, flies, small spoons. Fly casting and bait casting best sport.

**Food value:** Very good, particularly when right out of the water. Very rich. Smaller ones (tinkers) better than those weighing two or three pounds. Best baked in milk; cover with strips of bacon; add sliced onions. Also excellent fried or broiled.

**Size:** 2 and 3 lbs. common. Tackle record not known. Commercial record 7½ lbs.; 26 inches long.

#### EQUIPMENT FOR COMMON MACKEREL

Use fly fishing outfit outlined for shad (page 51), but change lure to small streamer or buck-tail flies tied on long-shanked hook. Circle school with boat, and cast into them, but do not put craft over them, as this may drive them down. Regulation 5½ foot steel or bamboo bait-casting rod and reel with 100 yards of 6 thread cutty-hunk and small spoons or bright plugs. Small mackerel squids with pork rind also effective. Mackerel are real fun on such light tackle. Take only what you can use.



**STRIPED MARLIN**  
(*Makaira mitsukurii*)

**Other names:** Spike-fish, spearfish.

**Range:** Most abundant on southern coast of California, and off Japan, and Hawaiian Islands. Also on Atlantic Coast from Gulf, and have been taken as far north as Long Island Sound.

**Habits:** Member of Sailfish family. Noted for its game qualities. Feeds on flying fish, mackerel, smelt, albacore, etc. Taps bait before taking as does sailfish. Great jumper on tackle. Little known of their breeding habits.

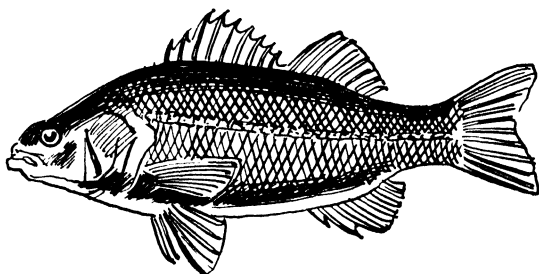
**Season:** June through October, most abundant in September.

**Method:** Trolling cut bait or whole bait; latter depends on locality.

**Food value:** Fair when fresh; improved when smoked.

**Record:** 692 lbs., Balboa, Calif., 1931.

**Note:** For tackle, see Tuna.



**WHITE PERCH**  
(*Morone americana*)

**Other names:** None known.

**Range:** Atlantic Coast from Gulf of St. Lawrence to Carolinas. Anadromous, living in both fresh and salt water.

**Habits:** Very gamy for its size. Ascends fresh waters to spawn. Thrives in landlocked waters. Travels in schools. Lives on small fish such as young herring and others; eats shrimps and small crustaceans, worms, bugs, etc.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Year round except where law or ice prevents. Lakes, ponds, rivers, and tidal streams (on latter water, half flood to half ebb, best). Dark days best. Appear in brackish tidal waters in spring of year. Morning and evening fishing better as rule.

**Method:** Bait fishing with shrimp, small minnows or shiners, worms. Also will strike small wet and streamer flies, and fly-rod lures at times. Stillfishing most practiced. Small spinners sometimes effective.

**Food value:** Excellent—firm sweet meat.

**Size, and record:** Average size 5 to 8 inches. Record 3 lbs. 15 oz., Lake Sebasticook, Me., 1920.

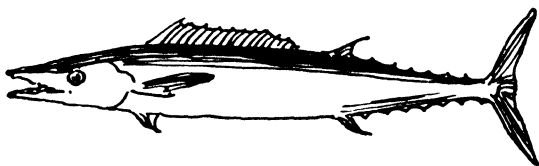
### EQUIPMENT FOR WHITE PERCH

**Rod:** Most any steel or bamboo fresh-water rod. Prefer 4½ oz. split bamboo fly rod or 8½ feet for most sport. Telescopic steel rods popular (and keep them well oiled).

**Reel and Line:** Single action fly reel with HEH fly line to balance 4½ oz. rod, if fly fishing or using fly rod; or regular bait-casting reel with silk line (50 yards of 14 lb. test plenty).

**Hook:** For bait fishing, sproat in sizes 4, 6, and 8. For fly fishing, 4, 6, 9, on sproat or limerick.

**Bait:** Shrimps, chubs, shiners or small pieces of cut bait; also bloodworms and clam necks. Artificials: small spinners, streamer flies (red and white bucktail good), wet flies (same favorites as trout), small spoons. Often prefer moving bait.



### THE PETOS

(*Acanthocybium solandri*)

**Other names:** Wahoo, peto, guarapuca, queenfish, ono.

**Range:** Widely scattered through tropical seas. Found on our coast only around the Florida Keys. Ber-

muda waters offer good wahoo fishing as do waters of the West Indies and Bahamas.

**Habits:** This mackerel-like fish (as Jordan and Evermann describe it) is a hard-hitting, hard-fighting game-fish of the first water. It has tremendous speed; and when hooked leaps like mad.

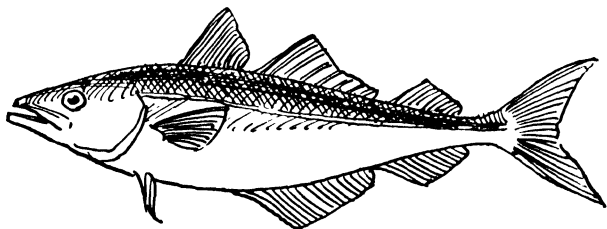
**Season:** Spring, summer and fall best.

**Method:** Trolling artificials or strip bait.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Record:** Official world's record is 133½ lbs. Taken at Green Cay, Bahama Isls., 1943.

**Note:** For tackle, see Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77).



**POLLACK**  
(*Pollachius virens*)

**Other names:** Coalfish, green cod, Boston bluefish.

**Range:** Common on both European and American coasts of the Atlantic—generally abundant as far south as France and New York.

**Habits:** Travels in great schools. Destructive to young codfish. Very productive—spawns on American coast in the fall. Will take flies, plugs, metal squids, feather jigs. Generally speaking is not considered a good food-fish, but when fresh, seems to the writer delicious. It is often eaten with delight under the alias of Boston Bluefish. A really fine game-fish which is gradually coming in for its deserved share of glory and attention. Will strike surface bait readily when feeding. Fights deep like tuna or amberjack. Usually taken offshore—a deep-sea fish.

**Season, time, place, tide:** May to October. Usually offshore but sometimes schools work in chasing feed. Incoming tide. Evening and early morning best.

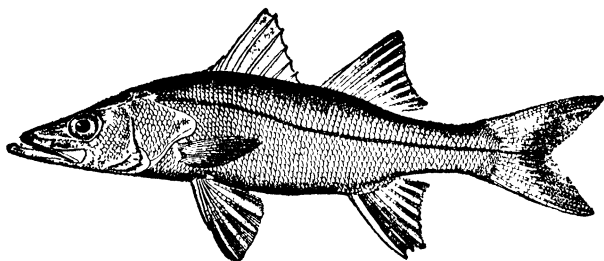
**Method:** Trolling most productive. Also taken still-fishing in deep offshore waters. Surf casting from jetties.

**Food value:** Good. Eat as soon as possible as they become “soft” quickly.

**Size:** Average from 1 to 40 lbs. Record unknown.

### EQUIPMENT FOR POLLACK

**Tackle:** The small fish, 1 to 15 lbs., can be taken on fly or bait-casting rods. For trolling for 15 to 40 pounders, see Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77). Smooth-running spinner baited with pork rind most effective.



### COMMON ROBALO

(*Centropomus undecimalis*)

**Other names:** Snook, sea-pike, sergeant fish, sergeant.

**Range:** From Florida southward through the West Indies to Surinam. Common at Porto Rico. Six species on Pacific Coast, but more popular with anglers in Florida.

**Habits:** Prefers sandy shores. Runs up Florida's and Gulf Coast's tidal rivers, and will take artificial lures. Average length 2 feet, although sometimes to 3 or 4 feet. Good surface scrapper.

**Season:** Spring, summer and fall best.

**Method:** Use light wire leader. Taken casting, trolling (very slowly), stillfishing.

**Food value:** Only fair. Meat is flaky.

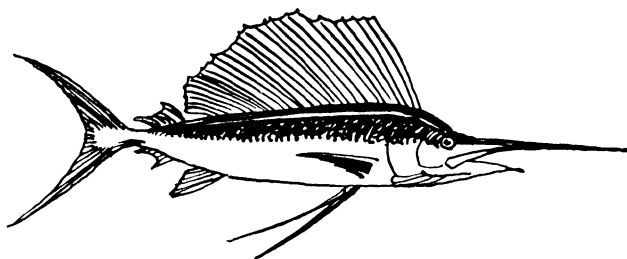
**Size, and record:** Average weight about 5 lbs. Record 50½ lbs., Gatun Spillway, C. Z., 1944.

### EQUIPMENT FOR COMMON ROBALO

A 3/6 outfit such as described under Average Tackle Specifications (page 82). Many anglers



use their regular fresh-water bass bait-casting outfits, as "snook" will strike most all the reliable bass plugs. Any live bait from shrimps to cut bait.



### ATLANTIC SAILFISH

(*Istiophorus americanus*)

**Other names:** Spike-fish, voilier, boohoo, quebuco, agula volador.

**Range:** On a par with tarpon in its popularity among sea anglers of southern waters. It is considered a real mark of distinction to have landed one of these inhabitants of the waters between the Florida reefs and the Gulf Stream to the West Indies. Georgia about northernmost range.

**Habits:** Has peculiar strike. Taps bait with upper jaw or bill to stun fish before eating. At tap, the angler releases line, giving fish about ten seconds to swallow bait before hook is driven home. Has large dorsal fin (from which name is derived) which stands as high as 3 feet. Slim rakish body. Most spectacular fighter; makes long runs and

has ability to walk on tail along with other tricks.

**Season, time, place, tide:** All tides. Late afternoon often best. January to May most productive, but caught all during year. Between reef and edge of Gulf Stream, and in Gulf Stream off east coast of Florida. Panama Bay. Deep-water fish, not taken from shore.

**Method:** Trolling offshore. Sailfish taps bait with bill first; at tap, drop back the bait by releasing line; let fish take bait; then set hook.

**Food value:** Fair.

**Size, and record:** Seldom over 75 lbs. Record 106 lbs., Miami Beach, Fla., 1929.

#### EQUIPMENT FOR SAILFISH

**Rod:** Regular boat sea rod of split bamboo (single or double built) or greenheart. Agate guides. Tip from 6 to 10 oz.

**Reel:** Must be free spool: star drag and leather thumb stall. To balance rod, 6 to 10 oz., use 4/0 reel. Reels should be of good grade; best metal throughout; some excellent reels on market from \$20 up—and well worth the price. A cheap reel is worthless for sailfishing.

**Line:** 9 to 21 thread cuttyhunk. Have line that will balance with rod by all means. For rod tip from 6 to 9 oz. use 9 to 18 thread line; for 9 to 14 oz. tip, 18 to 21 thread. About 250 to 300 yards is sufficient and 18 thread is plenty large enough.

**Hook:** 7/0 to 9/0 O'Shaughnessy.

**Bait:** Strip of mullet, barracuda belly, bonito. Latter is very tough, making excellent bait that will not pull off from trolling or from "tap" of sailfish. Also use a teaser about 30 feet behind boat. Teaser is big wooden or metal plug about 1 foot long, having red head and silver or white body. Teaser has no hooks, is merely to raise or decoy the fish, is then pulled in and baited hook is substituted.

**Leader:** No. 8 to 12; must balance with rod and line. See Average Tackle Specifications (page 82). Steel-wire leader, length 8 to 10 feet. Swivel on line end.

**Rod-butt rest:** Leather belt with socket which straps around waist. Almost indispensable in all heavy salt-water fishing. Gives extra leverage; protects abdomen. Most well-equipped boats have rod socket fastened to the fishing chair.

**Rod harness:** Takes great deal of strain off arms and wrists, as straps run over shoulders, and distributes the pressure of fighting fish; made of leather or canvas.

**Miscellaneous:** Sun glasses, sunburn ointment, pliers, swivels, extra hooks and leaders, camera, binoculars, etc. Gaff.

## PACIFIC SAILFISH

(*Istiophorus greyi*)

**Other names:** Sail, spike-fish.

**Range:** From Monterey to Peru. Very abundant off Central America. Cape Lucas seems to be a concentration point.

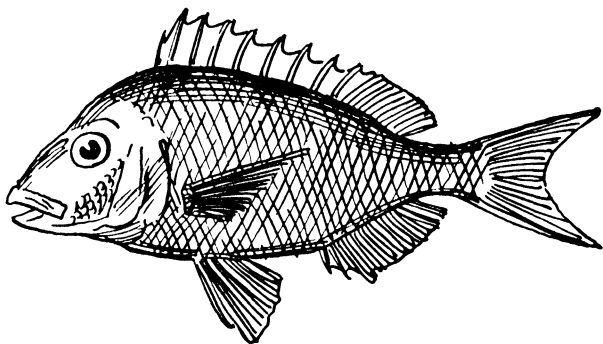
**Habits:** Feed on small fish and squids. Mackerel, sardines and mullet are a few of the fish which they commonly eat. Not as migratory as some of the other open-sea fishes such as tuna. Often seen basking on the surface with sail (dorsal fin) extended. Very fast swimmers. Fished for by same method as Atlantic sailfish, although the Pacific species runs to larger size. Differs from Atlantic sailfish by having more slender body, two dorsals closer together and more subdued coloration.

**Season:** May to October; more southern waters, April to November.

**Method:** Trolling.

**Food value:** Fair.

**Size, and record:** Average over 100 lbs. Record 190 lbs., Post Office Bay, Galápagos, 1938.



### COMMON SCUP

(*Stenotomus chrysops*)

**Other names:** Scuppaug, paugy, porgy, fair-maid, Northern scup.

**Range:** From Carolinas to Cape Cod; more abundant in northern section of its range.

**Habits:** Bottom feeder; main diet is mollusks. Good baits are clams, bloodworms. Erratic in appearance.

**Season, time, place, tide:** June through September best. Likes sandy bottom, inshore and offshore.

**Method:** Stillfishing most productive. Trolling with light tackle most fun.

**Food value:** Excellent. Fry in deep fat over a hot fire.

**Size:** Average weight from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 lbs. Record unknown.

## EQUIPMENT FOR COMMON SCUP

Usually taken on handline with light sinker and small hooks. Some use bait-casting rod and reel. Very palatable on the table and gaining recognition as light-tackle game-fish. Will also hit savagely on a spinner and seaworm trolling rig, and when a fly rod is used, they'll give an excellent account of themselves.

## BLACK SEA-BASS

(*Stereolepis gigas*)

**Other names:** California jewfish, giant bass, jewfish, Florida jewfish (*Promocrops itaiara*).

**Range:** Almost world-wide, counting the various species, in southern waters. California coast from the Falloron Islands southward to Magdalena Bay, Lower California.

**Habits:** Bottom feeder living on small fishes such as sardines, croakers, mullets, and herrings, and crabs and other crustaceans.

**Season and place:** Apparently non-migratory, as taken most all year round. Usually found in, or near, the kelp beds.

**Method:** Stillfishing with live or dead bait.

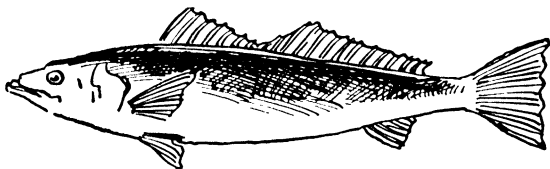
**Food value:** Fair.

**Size, and record:** Weighs up to 500 and 600 lbs. Record 515 lbs. (*Promocrops itaiara*) near Bakers Harbor, Fla., 1925. A 1916 California Tuna Club record shows a fish of 493 lbs.

## EQUIPMENT FOR BLACK SEA-BASS

Not rated very high as game-fish but well worthwhile for those who like to feel heavy fish. Suggest regular tuna outfit (see page 63).

**Note:** Reason for this sea-bass being called jewfish is unknown. Both California and Florida species much alike.



## CALIFORNIA WHITE SEA-BASS

(*Cynoscion nobilis*)

**Other names:** Pacific squiteague.

**Range:** Pacific Coast from Vancouver Island to Lower California. Most abundant from Santa Barbara to Lower California.

**Habits:** A member of Croaker family, but grows larger than Atlantic species of weakfish. Great fighter on tackle. Feeds on herring, sardines, smelts, and flying fish, shrimps, and squids. Frequents kelp beds; found close to shore.

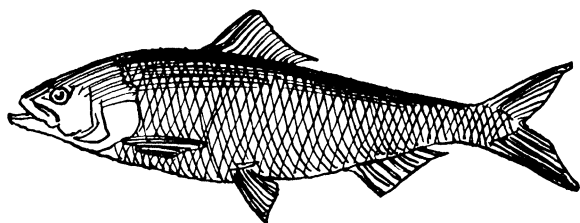
**Season, time, place, tide:** Most numerous from May to September. Channel Islands good April to August.

**Method:** Surf casting, or trolling slowly with spoons; also while still fishing with live bait.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size, and record:** Average 20 to 30 lbs. Record 74 $\frac{1}{4}$  lbs., Playa del Rey, Calif., 1941.

**Note:** For trolling rod, reel and line, see Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77); for surf casting, see Striped Bass.



## SHAD

(*Alosa sapidissima*)

**Other names:** None known.

**Range:** From Florida to Gulf of St. Lawrence, within which territory it ascends those streams which have not been polluted or dammed. Particularly abundant in Chesapeake region. Successfully introduced, from 1871 on, into Pacific waters, where it now is abundant from Monterey Bay to Columbia River.

**Habits:** Largest member of the Herring family. Is anadromous, entering fresh water to spawn and returning to the sea, where greater part of its life



is spent. Migration appears to be, like that of the codfish, from off shore on and back rather than north and south.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Spring months, March through June. Salt inlets or fresh-water rivers. In certain Connecticut streams they are taken in trout pools. Spring months, March through June.

**Method:** Same as in casting flies for brook trout. Shad are temperamental fish and at times will refuse all offerings, but if you happen to hit them right, you will find that they are one of the finest game-fish.

**Food value:** Excellent—particularly noted for its roe, always in highest demand.

**Size:** Average about 3 or 4 lbs., with weights over 9 lbs. rare. Tackle record not known. Commercial record 12 lbs.

#### TACKLE FOR SHAD

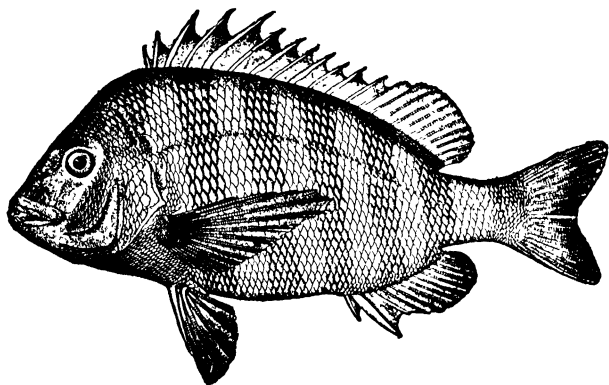
**Rod:** Regulation trout, 9-foot split bamboo, about 5½ oz.

**Reel:** Single action fly reel, salmon size.

**Line:** Tapered fly line (HDH will about balance with 5½ oz. rod) with at least 50 yards of 6 thread cuttyhunk (or 10 lbs. test silk bait-casting) line for backing, as a reserve to handle long runs of this gamy fish.

**Lures:** Wet and streamer or bucktail flies, on No. 6 or No. 8 hooks.

**Leader:** 6 foot level trout or tapered. Finer leaders believed to be better and some use 9 foot length.



### SHEEPSHEAD

(*Archosargus probatocephalus*)

**Other names:** None known.

**Range:** Formerly from Cape Cod to Texas; now rarely found north of the Chesapeake.

**Habits:** Bottom feeder; likes sandy bottom. Feeds on shellfish, crabs, shrimps. Very wary.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Found around old pilings, docks and bridge foundations as well as in the deeper spots of tidal rivers and inlets. Usually bites best on high tide. Season—May to November in northern range; all year in Florida and Gulf waters.

**Method:** Still fishing; with as little disturbance as possible; this fish is scary.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size:** Rarely exceeds 15 lbs.

## EQUIPMENT FOR THE SHEEPSHEAD

**Rod:** Light-weight boat rod, or bait-casting tackle.

**Reel:** 1/0 or 2/0 multiplying, or bait-casting reel.

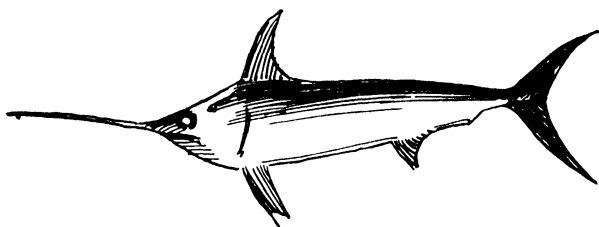
**Line:** 6 to 9 thread cuttyhunk, 100 yards enough.

**Hook:** O'Shaughnessy is good, but Virginia and Sproat is better; size about 4/0.

**Leader:** At least 4 ply gut or single strand of equal breaking tension.

**Bait:** Shellfish. Clams are standard and used with the shell merely broken, not removed.

**Notes:** The sheepshead is a careful biter and may pick up the bait gently several times. Strike when a definite run is felt—and if your hook sets, you are going to have a pleasant surprise at the fighting ability of this gamester. Don't be fooled when you draw the fish to the edge of your boat the first time; he will probably stage a sudden comeback which is apt to smash tackle unless you are prepared for his recuperation. Many sheepshead anglers bait the ground they are going to fish for a couple of days ahead of time by dropping down a mess of mashed clams. You can mark a spot of this kind by anchoring a cork buoy.



## BROADBILL SWORDFISH

(*Xiphias gladius*)

**Other names:** Vehuella, sofia, espada.

**Range:** Atlantic Coast of United States from Cape Breton to Cuba; Pacific Coast from California as far south as Chile.

**Habits:** Feeds on menhaden, squids, flying fish, mackerel. Better food value than the marlin swordfish. Here is a real prize for the best of anglers. Takes bait same as sailfish. Taps to kill prey, then swallows. When the hook is driven home, you have a real battle on hand. This fish is harpooned, as it lies on the surface, for commercial market, where it is in great demand. Usually travels alone or in pairs. Little known of spawning habits.

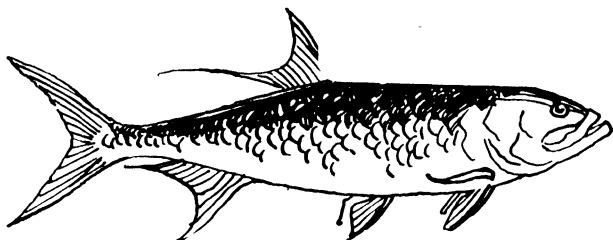
**Season:** July and August, best on Atlantic Coast; appearing in May but most abundant in September and October on Pacific Coast.

**Method:** Trolling cut bait; also whole mackerel or squid or other local bait fish.

**Food value:** Excellent; in great demand commercially.

**Size, and record:** Fish under 60 or 75 lbs. rare.  
Record 860 lbs., Tocopilla, Chile, 1940.

**Note:** For tackle, see Tuna.



### TARPON

(*Tarpon atlanticus*)

**Other names:** Silverfish, sabalo, silver king.

**Range:** Southern Atlantic (Long Island to Brazil).

**Habits:** This fish, particularly abundant on both coasts of Florida, is so well known as hardly to need description. Silvery sides and belly, black back scales edged with gold. Spectacular fighters, leaping frantically time and again, always shaking their heads like a bulldog to throw the hook. Hard mouth of bone, no teeth. Must drive hook into them hard when they first strike in order to set the steel securely. One of the finest game-fish in the world. Usually taken trolling or stillfishing from small boat. However have been taken on fly; also on light bait-casting tackle.

**Season, time, place, tide:** May to September considered best, as tarpon are most active when water is warmest. Taken in channels among Florida Keys as early as February. Best tides are from low tide on turn to flood. Night and early morning best. Florida and Gulf waters: cuts, rivers tideways, trestles, bays, inside channels.

**Method:** Trolling from power-boat with about 100 to 150 feet of line out. Stillfishing with live bait (let them run). Casting with plugs and spoons. Tarpon will sometimes strike spoons better when trolled faster than bait and closer, 20 to 50 feet, behind boat. Set hook with good solid yank to drive barb through bony covering of tarpon's mouth. Also taken on special streamer flies and fly rods—your salmon rod will do.

**Food value:** Not commonly eaten, although some salt it down in steaks and proclaim it excellent. Real sportsmen release them alive, unless catch is a trophy or prize fish.

**Size, and record:** Average 50 to 130 lbs. Record 247 lbs., Panuco River, Mexico, 1938. Up to 250 lbs. (commercial take).

#### EQUIPMENT FOR TARPON

**Rod:** From 6 oz. to 14 oz. split-bamboo rods, agate guides. Boat rods, approx. 6½ feet overall, for trolling. Smaller ones taken also by casting with good strong fresh-water bass rods and tackle to balance.

**Reel:** Must be equipped with drag; of best material. Should balance with rod—see Reel, under Atlantic Sailfish, Equipment.

**Line:** Varies widely according to weight of rod and size of fish being taken, from 9 thread to 30 thread. See Line, under Atlantic Sailfish, Equipment.

**Hook:** 8/0 to 11/0 Sobey or O'Shaughnessy.

**Gaff:** Owing to weight of fish, some guides harpoon them in mouth—this avoids spoiling a fish for mounting. Other guides use gaff. If you are going to return fish to water, do not use gaff.

**Bait:** Live bait, strip-cut bait, spoons and plugs. Have had good success with the Japanese feather minnow with metal head.

**Leader:** Usually steel (No. 9) wire at least 6 feet long. Tarpon will roll and may twist line around their bodies otherwise, and if leader is too short will fray line to breaking point.

**Notes:** Mosquito dope during summer months. Unguentine if not accustomed to exposure to sun, and broad-brimmed fishing hats. A pair of pliers will come in handy in attaching leaders, etc. After hooking a tarpon if you are trolling from a power-boat, stop your motor and give the fish a sporting chance; he will put up a more spectacular battle than when dragged and drowned by a moving boat. In trolling for tarpon hold rod almost horizontal, that is, about parallel to water and pointed toward the lure. This allows for longer upward sweep of rod in hooking the fish on first strike, and also to meet the jumps with a long hard pull to keep line tight when fish leaps. A loose line on a leaping tarpon makes it easier for fish to shake the hook from its bony mouth.

**GAGGLES**

(*Microlepsis microlepsis*)

**Other names:** "Gags."

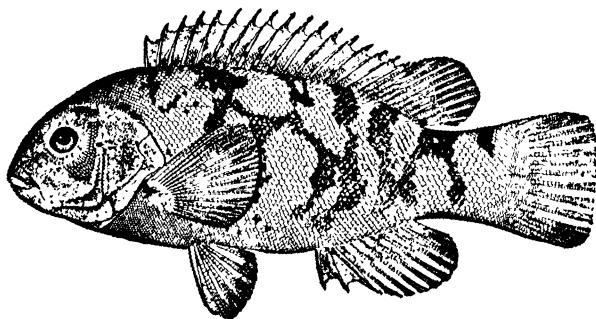
**Range:** Caught on tarpon grounds.

**Habits:** Of Grouper family. This fish, that comes in like a log and spoils bait, is mentioned merely because of its nuisance value to tarpon fishermen in certain waters. Can hardly be called game-fish. Found in shallow waters and coral reefs.

**Food value:** Good.

**Size:** Up to 8 or 9 lbs.

**Note:** No tackle specifications given, as the "gags" are not sought by anglers.

**TAUTOG**

(*Tautoga onitis*)

**Other names:** Blackfish, white chin, oyster fish.

**Range:** New Brunswick to New Jersey.



**Habits:** Belong to Wrasse-fish family. Like rocky shores, piers, wrecks; also sandy bottom off-shore. Heavy teeth for breaking shellfish; extra set of "teeth" or grinders in throat. Live on crabs, lobsters, clams, mussels, and will bite these readily. Also take "fiddlers" and periwinkles. Bottom fish. Gamy. Bite quickly, hard; angler must be alert to hook them.

**Season, time, place, tide:** From the first of May to early November as a rule. Winter weather drives these fish away from shore rocks and shoals into deeper water; probably pass the winter in the deeper parts of the ocean or bays a little way from their spring, summer and fall habitat. Best fishing on the incoming tide. Will often bite at any time of tide, but the flood is the better time along the rocky New England shore. Also caught in bays or harbors; prefer rocky bottom.

**Method:** Casting from rocky shore into deep cuts or pools; also from boat. Stillfishing on bottom. Set hook immediately fish strikes—and we mean *immediately*—as tautog are as hard to hook as any fish we know.

**Food value:** Excellent. Firm white meat which is delicious. A hint to the novice: dressing tautog is a skinning process which is much easier when done before leaving the fishing ground. Wash the dressed fish in clean salt water and, if possible, pack in wet rockweed. This keeps the flesh firm and seems to improve the flavor. Larger fish, from 7 lbs. up, are baked: for this method of cooking merely scale, remove gills and entrails. Makes one of finest fish chowders: add pork and onions. Fry the 1 and 2 pounders.

**Size, and record:** Average 2 to 5 lbs. Record 21 $\frac{1}{8}$  lbs., Sheepshead Bay, N. Y., 1937.

## EQUIPMENT FOR TAUTOG

**Rod:** Lancewood or split-bamboo surf rod; 6, 6½ or 7 foot tip—30 inch butt—fairly sturdy to stand the strain of hauling through weeds and over rocks.

**Reel:** Almost any strong salt-water reel with a capacity of 100 yards; free spool preferred.

**Line:** 12 to 18 thread cuttyhunk. About 100 yards enough.

**Hook:** Best grade obtainable, as tautog has very tough jaws and will straighten out a cheap hook. Virginia pattern, hollow point, No. 3/0 or 4/0. Piece of sandpaper or small carborundum stone to keep hooks clean and sharp. Customary to use two hooks, one about 2 or 3 inches above other.

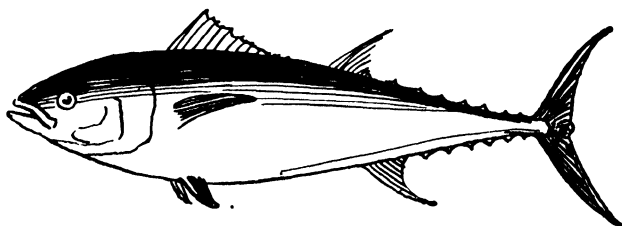
**Bait:** Usually the crabs or shellfish abundant in adjacent waters. The large periwinkles cut into pieces about an inch square are excellent at times. Whole green crabs may be used if they are not too large; when too large for one bait, cut in middle from front to back. When baiting with crabs, pass hook through between legs as this is toughest part and prevents bait from washing off. Clams and mussels are good at times, but hard to keep on hook as they are too soft. Also, lobsters, quahaugs. Have plenty, as sea perch (cunners, chaugheads) are usually abundant and great bait stealers.

**Sinker:** This fish is a bottom feeder and a 3 to 5 oz. sinker is usually needed to take your bait down to him and to hold against tide or surf. Sinker should be on extreme end of line with hooks

(usually two) hanging about one foot above. This allows the faintest touch to pass to the senses of the fisherman. (Note: The tautog usually bites with a savageness that is surprising for his size.) Sinker ovate in outline is best, does not catch so easily in rocks, ledges, etc. Take several spares. At times, he will give only a gentle nip, and hook must be set at once.

**Rod-butt rest:** Leather belt with cup gives more leverage in hooking and playing fish. Protects stomach.

**Footwear:** Many fishermen use a hip rubber boot which is tough and heavy—a longshoreman's boot; however, if you do not mind getting your feet wet, canvas shoes with rubber bottoms are excellent as they help you climb over the rocks with more ease and comfort. Felt-soled trout wading boots or shoes best if fishing from the rocks.



**BLUEFIN TUNA**  
(*Thunnus thynnus*)

**Other names:** Great albacore, horse mackerel, leaping tuna or tunnyfish, bluefin.

**Range:** Atlantic Coast: Newfoundland to Florida and Bahamas. Pacific: Columbia River to Lower California. Also in Mediterranean and other European waters. Nearly worldwide in range.

**Habits:** A hard-fighting fish that gives plenty of excitement when hooked and sometimes for many hours. A real racehorse when it comes to action. Feeds on most all smaller schooling fish, such as flying fish, sardines, herring, etc. Used to be thrown away by market-men, but now considered of real food value. Much sought by anglers now, also. Is an underwater fighter as contrasted with the surface fighters such as sailfish, marlin and tarpon. For many years the "horse mackerel" of the Atlantic and the "tuna" of the Pacific were considered as two distinct and separate fishes. It is now established through investigation that these fish are one and the same.

**Food value:** Good. Often the canned tuna is mixed with chicken—probably one tuna to one chicken—to make chicken salad. Fresh tuna is rather oily but very, very edible.

**Size:** Commonly reaches a weight of 500 to 1000 lbs. in the Atlantic; has been taken off Nova Scotia (commercially) up to 1200 and 1300 lbs. In the Pacific, this species seldom weighs over 250 lbs.

**Record:** Official rod and reel record is 927 lbs., Ipswich Bay, Mass., 1940. Nova Scotia (Liverpool) established an unofficial record of 956 lbs. by Thomas Howell of Chicago. Bimini record of 630 lbs. (1937) by famous guide, Tommy Gifford.

**YELLOWFIN TUNA**

(*Neothunnus albacora*)

**Other names:** Yellowfin, yellow-finned albacore, tuna.

**Range:** From Gulf of California southward to Galapagos; also common in Japan, Hawaii, India, and Red Sea. Best season in Lower California and Gulf is June to August; off California from August through October; most abundant on Mexican and Central American coasts from September through May.

**Habits:** Spawning time and place unknown. Apparently feed on most everything from shrimps to octopi to most all small fishes. Tagging experiments now being conducted by the California Division of Fish and Game to trace migrations. Very highly prized as a game-fish by Pacific anglers. Differs from the bluefin in coloration and by having a pectoral fin which is as long as or sometimes slightly longer than the head. A warm-water fish. Will take swiftly trolled lures such as feather jigs, metal squids and other artificials.

**Food value:** Excellent, much better than bluefin tuna.

**Size, and record:** While the yellowfin does reach a size of over 400 lbs., specimens of from 100 to 125 lbs. are considered large. Unofficial record 145 lbs., off Cape San Lucas, 1924.

**EQUIPMENT FOR TUNA**

**Season, time, place, tide:** Tuna most abundant on both Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, June, July,

August and September. Deep-water fish. All tides. Tuna usually feed best from mid-morning until mid-afternoon, or if in a rip, may depend on tide.

**Method:** Trolling about 40 feet behind power-boat for tuna. School tuna (10 to 50 lbs.) can be taken right in the propeller wash (8 to 10 feet behind boat) as the disturbance seems to attract them. Approximate speed: 5 to 8 m.p.h. Pacific anglers frequently use a kite. Outriggers becoming more common. Nova Scotia anglers have devised the grape-vine method, which means 8 or 10 herring trolled close to stern of boat as teasers. Also in tidal current, chumming is often employed. For the bigger fish, 100 lbs. and up, troll 50 to 150 feet behind boat. At Ipswich, stillfishing near commercial draggers has been very successful.

**Rod:** Regular boat, deep-sea rod of split bamboo or hickory. One-piece tip from 16 to 30 oz. Also see tackle specifications of salt-water Angling Clubs. Should have agate butt and tip guides—best if agate guides, or monel metal throughout. •

**Reel:** 9/0 to 16/0 deep-sea reel with star drag or brake. Should be of best materials to stand necessary strain. See Average Tackle Specifications (page 82) for exact information on balanced tackle—this is most important. Also extra reel clamps are necessary for the big ones. For the school tuna a 4/0 reel and rod and line to balance is often used.

**Line:** 24 to 72 thread, which will test 72 to 216 lbs. respectively; must balance with rod, see Average Tackle Specifications (page 82) and also Atlantic Sailfish, Equipment. From 500 to 1000

yards. The fifteen feet next to the leader should be doubled.

**Hook:** Nos. 8/0 to 14/0 O'Shaughnessy or Sobey hooks. Rounded hook better for swordfish.

**Gaff:** And an experienced man to handle it.

**Bait:** Feather jigs, cedar squid, metal squids, Wilson spoon, whole mackerel, whole herring, squid, cut bait.

**Leader:** Numbers 7 to 9 steel wire—10 to 15 feet long; special braided wire cable leaders are also used on the big fellows.

**Rod harness:** Distributes strain of fighting fish, relieves pressure on arms and wrists, as this harness fits over shoulders and across back much like a vest.

**Rod-butt rest:** Leather cup either on belt around waist or fastened to swivel seat, to prevent bruising body with butt end of rod, to provide leverage. For heavy fish, a metal rod socket is fastened to the front edge of the chair seat.

**Kite:** Used primarily to make bait skip along surface like a live fish. Enable fishermen to troll to either side of boat, thus placing bait over a fish, without bringing the boat too near.

**Teaser:** Wooden or metal usually with red head and white body. Has no hooks. Trolled behind boat to bring fish to surface, then hauled in as baited hook is substituted. Also Nova Scotia grape-vine method, already mentioned.

**Outriggers:** Metal or bamboo poles, 15 to 22 feet long, to pull bait away from, and to either side of, wake of boat. Line held by clip, manipulated

pulley-fashion to end of outrigger. The clip releases the line back to the rod tip when a strike is had.

**Note:** It is a well-known fact that a knot in a line greatly weakens its strength; therefore to avoid a knot in attaching line to swivel, the following method is followed for small or school tuna. Take a strip of rawhide about 8 inches long,  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wide, sharpen ends to a point;  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from each end punch a hole big enough to accommodate line; slip rawhide through loop of swivel, bring ends of rawhide together; run line through holes in rawhide, then spirally wind line down to swivel, pass line through loop of swivel; then spiral line back up to ends of rawhide, catching ends of rawhide together with several half hitches. This will stand the full strain of the test strength of the line, without putting pull on knot in line. Or any other method of attaching line to swivel which does not put a knot in the line, such as sailors hitch or a series of half hitches with end of line seized to main line.

**Formula used to estimate weight of tuna and swordfish:** Multiply the square of the girth in inches by the length in inches and divide by 800. The measurements are taken from the tip of the lower jaw of either species to the crotch of the tail, not the tip.



**COMMON WEAKFISH**

, (*Cynoscion regalis*)

**Other names:** Squiteague, sea-trout, squit, summer trout.

**Range:** Entire length of Gulf and Atlantic Coasts—north to Bay of Fundy. Furnishes great sport to anglers. Best fishing is from Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, south to Florida and across the Gulf to Texas.

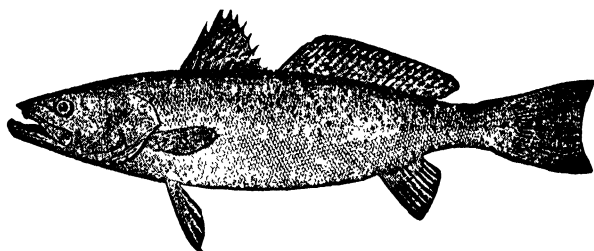
**Habits:** Has tender mouth which tears easily. It must, therefore, be played carefully. Strikes hard and runs fast. Feeds on nearly every small fish: shrimps, mullet, menhaden, herring, sand-eels, squids, sperling, sea-worms. Run in schools. Loves the tide rips. Also taken in surf.

**Season, time, place, tide:** North Atlantic—evening incoming tide, night and slack flood. July to October 1st. Seldom taken north of Cape Cod. South Atlantic—evening incoming tide, night and slack flood. January to June. Cuts along beach; channels of harbors, bays, etc. Prefer deeper waters than striped bass. Long Island, New Jersey, Chesapeake, and Carolinas, Florida, Louisiana and Texas famous.

**Method:** Surf casting, fly fishing, bait casting with short rod, or stillfishing or trolling from a boat. A wary fish easily scared by a commotion in the boat. Quiet helps success. See Equipment below next species.

**Food value:** Excellent. Fry small ones; bake or fillet and broil larger fish.

**Size, and record:** Average 2 to 5 lbs. Record 17 lbs., 3 oz., Peconic Bay, N. Y., 1933.



### SPOTTED WEAKFISH

(*Cynoscion nebulosus*)

**Other names:** Spotted sea-trout, speckled salt-water trout, salmon.

**Range:** Gulf Coast to Long Island.

**Habits:** Same family as Common Weakfish and just as gamy.

**Record:** 12 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs., Cocoa, Fla., 1944.

### EQUIPMENT FOR WEAKFISH

**Rod:** Surf casting: 9-12 oz. tip, split bamboo. Fly fishing: 5-9 oz. rod, steel or bamboo, 9-10 feet. Bait casting: 6-9 oz. rod, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ -7 feet, steel or bamboo.

**Reel:** Surf casting: A good grade 2/0 or 3/0 free spool with star drag. Fly fishing: Single action salmon. Bait casting: Any good fresh-water quadruple multiplying reel.

**Line:** Surf casting 6, 9 or 12 thread cuttyhunk—at least 150 yards. Fly fishing: HDH or HCH enameled—6 thread cuttyhunk for backing. Bait

casting: 14-28 lbs. test silk or 6 thread cutty-hunk.

**Hook:** Carlisle, Limerick, or sproat, 4/0 to 6/0.

**Live bait:** Minnows, shrimps, shedder crabs, mullet, squids.

**Artificial lures:** Streamers and bucktail flies: 1. White. 2. Red and White. 3. Supervisor. 4. Black Ghost. 5. Roosters Regret.

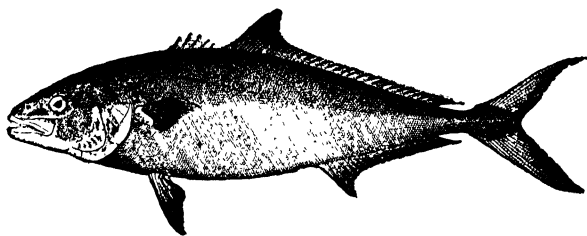
**Bait-casting lures:** 1. Pike finish. 2. Red head and white body 3. Jointed pike finish. 4. All metal minnow. 5. Spoons. 6. Transparent or plastic lures.

**Leader:** Heavy gut—3 or 4 ply, or light copper or steel wire. Use tinned wire if bluefish are also running.

**Landing net:** Wide mouth, long handle if in boat. Surf fishing, can be beached.

**Miscellaneous:** Scales, thin-bladed knife, hook stone, etc.

**Note:** Weakfish have a very soft mouth; must be played carefully or hook will tear out. Name derived from tenderness of their flesh. Both Common and Spotted Weakfish are members of the Croaker family, thus relating them to the California species of Corbina.



**YELLOWTAIL**  
(*Seriola dorsalis*)

**Other names:** Amberjack, amberfish, white salmon.

**Range:** Pacific Coast, Capè San Lucas north to Santa Barbara Islands, and Monterey; on both coasts of the Gulf; Cerralvo Island good ground, as is Cedros Island. Australia waters.

**Habits:** Well rated as game-fish, member of Pompano family. Feeds on smaller fish such as herring, sardines and flying fish, mackerel, smelts, anchovies, crustaceans. Has vicious strike; fights hard. Spawns in spring and early summer.

**Season, time, place:** Off San Diego, from early March to early May and off Los Angeles about a month later, where they stay until fall. Abundant in Gulf and off Lower California coast in fall and winter. See above for favorite fishing grounds.

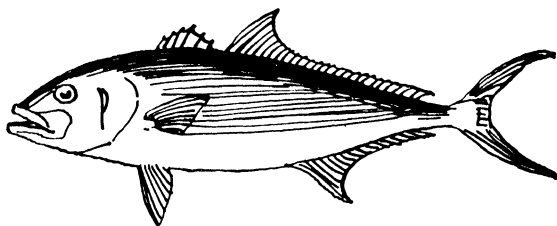
**Methods:** Trolling most common way. Use Japanese feather jigs, metal squids, and other artificial trolling lures. When other methods failed, they have been taken with bait from a drifting boat.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size, and record:** Average 8 to 15 lbs. Record 88 lbs., Australia, 1938. Tuna Club of California records 60½ lbs. as largest taken in American waters.

**Note:** For tackle, see Equipment for Reef Fishing (page 77).

## Florida Reef Fish



**AMBERJACK**  
(*Seriola lalandi*)

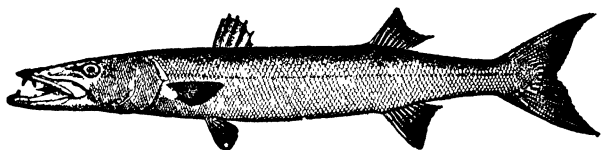
**Other names:** Amberfish, jack.

**Range:** Mediterranean and West Indies, Florida east coast.

**Habits:** One of the gamiest of reef fish. Runs up to 60 lbs. and more. Bores for bottom; a hard puller. Eats mullet, shrimps, crabs. Amberjacks make a rush every time you get them up near boat. Of the Crevalle family.

**Food value:** Excellent.

**Size, and record:** Average 10 to 20 lbs. Record 106 lbs., Passagrille, Fla., 1937.



## GREAT BARRACUDA

(*Sphyræna barracuda*)

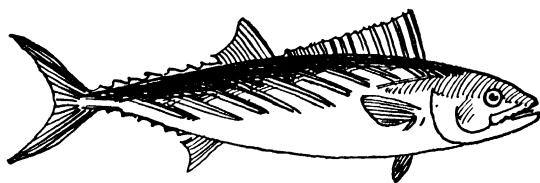
**Other names:** Sea tiger, Florida barracuda, cuda.

**Range:** Bermuda to Brazil. Abundant in outside reefs off Florida coast.

**Habits:** One of the most savage of fish. Will strike most anything moving in water. Will even attack human beings. Built like a pickerel, but with long pointed teeth, which fit into sockets of bone. Silvery sides and belly with irregular dark brown splotches on sides. Back is brown. Often bite through a hooked fish such as a Spanish mackerel in one snap.

**Food value:** Fair—not generally considered good eating.

**Size, and record:** Average 5 to 20 lbs. Record 103¼ lbs., Bahama Islands, 1932.



**BONITO**  
(*Sarda sarda*)

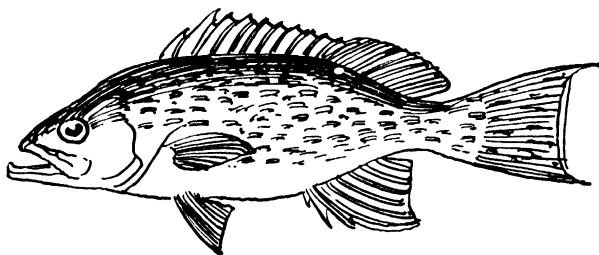
**Other names:** Common bonito, oceanic bonito, bone-jack, watermelon, etc.

**Range:** From Florida to Cape Cod.

**Habits:** One of the fastest fish in sea. Heavy shoulders tapering to almost nothing at forked tail, which is claimed to propel them 100 yards at one sweep. Caught between reef and Gulf off Keys. Very gamy, making line fairly sizzle through water as they catch sight of boat. All fins fit in grooves so that they slip through the water with ease. Silvery sides, streaked with blue; back is brownish blue. Used for sailfish bait when cut in strips. Frequently found on Jersey, Montauk and Block Island tuna grounds.

**Food value:** Fair.

**Size:** Average 3 to 10 lbs. No official record; largest about 15 lbs.



**GROUPERS**  
(Genus *Epinephelus*)

**Note:** There are so many varieties in the Grouper family that we are treating them as one type. All have about same characteristics and value to sport fishermen.

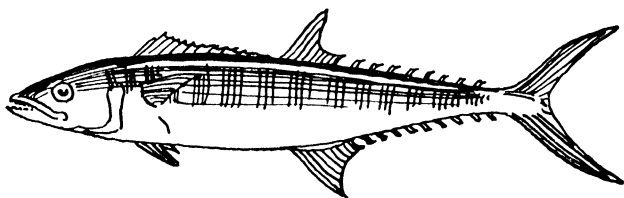
**Range:** From Virginia to West Indies and South America. Very common on Florida reefs off Keys, and on Pacific from Cape San Lucas south.

**Habits:** Mouth like a ten-quart pail. Rather ugly fish and not a fighter. Will dive to bottom if it can and get into a hole between rocks. Invariably this means loss of both fish and end tackle.

**Food value:** Excellent, particularly tasty as base of fish chowder.

**Size:** Varies according to species; from 5 to 50 lbs.





### KINGFISH

(*Scomberomorus cavalla*)

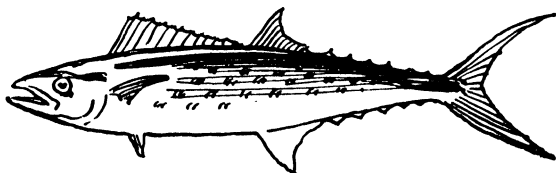
**Other names:** Cavalla, caballa, cero, king mackerel, king cero, Florida kingfish, great kingfish.

**Range:** Coast of Texas, Florida, north to Cape Cod.

**Habits:** Mackerel family. Excellent fighters. Often leap entirely out of water after bait. In deep water just off reef. Long racy fish. Run in schools. Silver sides and belly, blue back. Usually taken trolling.

**Food value:** Most excellent.

**Size, and record:** Average: 10 to 15 lbs. Record 73½ lbs., Bimini, Bahamas, 1935.



### SPANISH MACKEREL

(*Scomberomorus maculatus*)

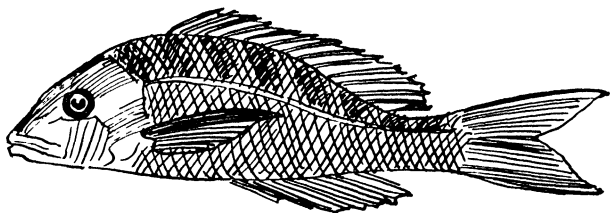
**Other names:** Mackerel, cero, spotted mackerel.

**Range:** Atlantic, north to Cape Ann, south to Brazil, and in Gulf of Mexico. In the Pacific, we have the closely related Sierra mackerel; Pacific range from California south.

**Habits:** This truly beautiful fish is migratory, gamy and hard striking. Runs in offshore schools. Voracious. Strikes at most any moving bait. Occasionally comes close to shore and affords great sport for pier and jetty anglers.

**Food value:** Excellent. Fry, bake or broil.

**Size, and record:** Average 2 to 5 lbs. Record about 25 lbs.; no official record.



### MUTTON FISH

(*Lutianus analis*)

**Other names:** Snapper, pargo.

**Range:** Gulf of Mexico, Florida coast, Bermuda to Brazil.

**Habits:** Snapper family. Caught trolling only occasionally, usually taken stillfishing. One of the most beautifully colored of Florida fish—a brilliant seemingly transparent coral pink. Fairly gamy.

**Food value:** Most excellent.

**Size:** Average 3 to 8 lbs. Largest about 25 lbs.; no official record.

### EQUIPMENT FOR REEF FISHING IN FLORIDA WATERS

For Amerjack, Barracuda, Bonita Grouper, Kingfish, Wahoo, Spanish Mackerel, Mutton Fish, African Pompano, Yellowjack, etc.

*Note:* Reef fishing gives one a variety which, to a tyro, is astounding.

**Season, time, place, tide:** Winter and spring generally preferable. Tide, as a rule, does not matter. Fish strike all day. Change in tide level only about 2 feet around the Keys.

**Method:** Usually trolling, 4 to 6 m.p.h.; occasionally stillfishing for the bottom fishes.

**Rod:** Most any good boat rod of split bamboo. Length, including butt, approximately 6½ feet. Guides, either agate or nickel, and genuine agate tip-guide. Weight of one-piece tip between 6 and 14 oz. Smaller fish also taken on heavy fly rod.

**Reel:** Get the best reel procurable. It is worth the price. There are some excellent ones on the market for from \$15 to \$30. Capacity at least 250 yards. Must be fitted with drag (brake). For balance, see Average Tackle Specifications (page 82).

**Line:** Any good genuine well laid cuttyhunk line. 12, 15, 18, 21 and 24 thread sizes, testing 3 lbs.

per thread. For balance, see Average Tackle Specifications.

**Hooks:** Nos. 7/0, 8/0 and 9/0 O'Shaughnessy or Evans.

**Bait:** Best seems to be a mullet split lengthwise from in back of gills right along backbone through tail. Rig on hook so that tail end extends back of bend about 3 inches and so head may be fastened through eye of hook by light wire. Should have wiggly action if properly fastened. Also lead squids brightly polished. These fish will strike at almost anything when the water is clear. Spoons or any artificial lure of good size such as musky lures and other oversize plugs. Japanese feather lures also are "killers."

**Leader:** Phosphor bronze wire, tinned tempered steel or piano wire, nickel silver or braided steel wire about 5 feet long. Watch carefully for rust deterioration; safest to change leaders fairly frequently.

**Rod rest:** Leather cup for butt of rod on chair if no regular chair socket available, or a belt cup as in surf fishing.

**Swivels:** Always use one between leader and line. Trolling will otherwise untwist your line and weaken it disastrously. Be sure to have a dozen or more of these in your kit. To prevent rusting, keep in box and sprinkle generously with flour, which absorbs the moisture.

**Thumb-drag:** If your reel does not come furnished with one, be sure to have one put on, as it enables you to get extra tension on your lines; may save a burned thumb. Cost is just over two bits—and worth three times the price.

**Thumb-stall:** A hard knitted wool thumb-stall is a necessity, if you do not have a leather thumb-drag. If you tried to stop a big fish from taking line with your bare thumb pressed down on the spool of the reel you would soon have a very sore thumb (or what was left of it). Leather drag best.

**Line twister:** Constant trolling will often untwist your line, greatly weakening it besides making it mean to handle. Remove end tackle and tie on the line twister, which looks much like a spoon. Troll this with long line; in a very few minutes your line will be well laid again and ready for more fishing.

**Pliers:** An indispensable tool for cutting and attaching wire leaders.

**Note:** Practically all these fish will hook themselves. You do not need to strike viciously as the fish hit with speed and power. As in any other kind of fishing, always keep a tight line. Do not give line unless you have to, to avoid too much strain on your rod. A 50 lb. test line will stand a lot of pressure. (Average 18 thread cuttyhunk tests 54 lbs. when wet.) In using a brand new line which has just been wound on reel, trail out entire length on way to fishing ground and rewind evenly. This will take out kinks, and enable angler to rewind wet line tightly on reel. Otherwise a new line will cut through toward spindle of reel and snarl, all of which may mean a lost fish.

## General Nuisances of the Sea

### DOGFISH

(*Squalus scanthias*)

**Other names:** None known, although they've been called many unprintable names by anglers. At times the waters fairly teem with them, and they apparently drive off game-fish or at least get to the bait first.

**Range:** Most abundant in cooler waters; sometimes found in tropical waters. One species or another found on both coasts of America, also in Europe.

**Habits:** Greedy. Destructive to small game-fishes. Feed so close to shore that in stormy weather they chase small feed too close and get washed up on the beach. We've seen them stranded by the hundreds. When the small ones (sometimes locally called "pups") are "in," we've seen many a surf caster go home in disgust rather than feed these ravenous pests good bait.

**Food value:** Not commonly eaten but we understand that they are marketed under the name of "gray fish" and called edible.

**Size:** No official record. We've seen specimens that would go up to 20 lbs.

**Notes:** Distinguishable from the sharks, to which it is related, by the fact that the dogfish has a strong spine on the dorsal fins and has sharp, squarish cutting teeth.

## COMMON SKATE

*(Raja erinacea)*

**Other names:** Barn door, old maid, ray, possum (rolls up when pulled on beach).

**Range:** Cold-water fishes, the various species pretty well scattered on both coasts of America and Europe. The common skate is found on the Atlantic Coast in too great abundance at times to please the surface and bottom game fishermen, as skates will strike at most any bottom bait—which is annoying when you prefer stripers, channel bass, etc. Also on the Atlantic Coast are the species *Raja loevis* and *Raja ocellata*. California species corresponding to our Atlantic common skate is *Raja inornata*, which seems to prefer sandy stretches.

**Habits:** The one habit which concerns most game fishermen is the fact that skates are great bait spoilers and time wasters. We've been on the beach when every cast brought a nudge and a strike from skates. In short, they are a nuisance.

**Food value:** Poor, although it is said that "scallops" are made from their wings.

**Size:** No official record. Skates often attain a length of 4 and 5 feet.

## AVERAGE SALT-WATER TACKLE SPECIFICATIONS

### THE 3/6 OUTFIT

**Rod:** Complete (both butt and tip)—not over 6 oz. in weight nor under 6 feet.

**Reel:** 2/0 or 3/0, with or without drag handle.

**Line:** 200 yards of 6 thread (test 18 lbs. approx.)  
(The specifications of not more than 6 oz., not less than 6 feet, and no line heavier than 6 thread, account for the name of 3/6.)

**Leader:** Wire. Not heavier than No. 7.

**Hook:** Not larger than 7/0.

### THE 6/9 (LIGHT TACKLE) OUTFIT

**Rod:** Tip not over 6 oz in weight, nor less than 5 feet in length. Butt not over 14 inches long.

**Reel:** 3/0 to 4/0.

**Line:** 300 yards of 9 thread. (The name or designation of 6/9 refers to the 6 oz. tip and 9 thread line.)

**Leader:** Wire No. 8.

**Hook:** 9/0, not larger.



## MEDIUM WEIGHT TACKLE

**Rod:** Tip over 6 oz. but under 9 oz.

**Reel:** 4/0.

**Line:** 12 to 15 thread.

**Leader:** Wire No. 8 or No. 9.

**Hook:** To suit type of fishing.

## HEAVY TACKLE

**Rod:** Tip not less than 5 feet; and not over 9 oz.  
(Avalon Tuna Club, not over 16 oz.)

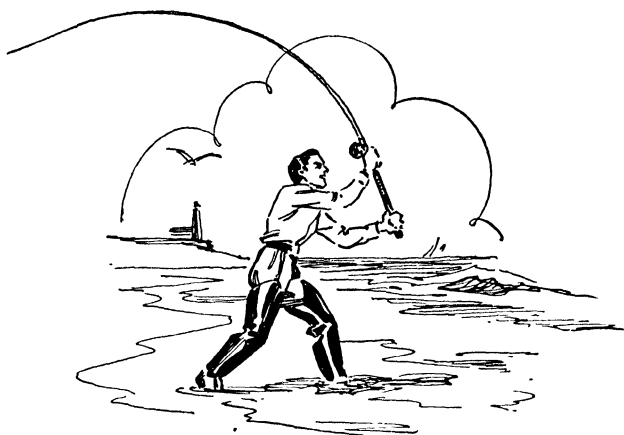
**Reel:** 4/0 to 9/0.

**Line:** 18 to 36 thread.

**Leader:** Wire, Nos. 9 to 12.

**Hooks:** As type of fishing demands.

These outfits are well balanced, having been arrived at by the experience of many expert anglers. Length of tip determined by measuring from shoulder of female (butt) ferrule with tip completely seated to outer end of tip guide. Over-all rod measurements are also with tip seated in butt.



## Chapter 3

### SURF CASTING

#### BEACH-BOUND

LET'S spend the day along the outer beach on Cape Cod, which from Monomoy to Provincetown is shaped almost like a fish-hook. We'll leave the car at the end of a twisting grass-grown road in the sparse shade of sand pines, whose gnarled trunks show the effects of fighting many winter storms. We trudge over the dunes which the winds have carved with delicate strokes, leaving queer lace-like formations of fine white sand glistening in the sun. As we top the rise, the ocean tumbles away to a distant horizon.

The rumble of the incessant surf on the hard-packed beach comes clearly to us now; the clean smell of salt greets our nostrils with a keenness that makes us breathe deeply of the bracing air. Before descending to the beach, we stop a minute and scan the waters to right and left, taking careful note of the color of the water up to 150 yards off shore. One of the first things we note is that in one place the waves are breaking farther out than at any other point. This marks a bar of sand, and a darker stretch of water means a deep hole on the inshore side of it—a good place for striped bass to lie in wait for food washing off the bar through the perpetual action of the waves and tide. With hopes steadily mounting, we make for the spot and set up our tackle. The split-bamboo surf-rod tip, sturdy but springy, is fitted carefully to the butt to insure our guides being in line with our reel, for crookedly set guides interfere with casting through increased friction and cause unnecessary wear on the line. The line is 9, 12, or 15 thread cuttyhunk and of the best grade; we haven't forgotten the fellow that broke away last year because of a faulty line.

Next comes the free-spool reel, capable of holding at least two hundred yards of line, and built to stand the heave and haul of surf casting. It is loaded, almost to the guards, as a good-sized

bass will eat up distance like a plane with a tail wind. We slip into our hip-boots, strap on our rod-butt rest ready for action. A couple of preliminary short casts to thoroughly wet down the line—then, with bait adjusted (we learn from the longshoremen that they are taking summer squid) we get ready for the cast. Over in back goes the rod till the tip almost touches the beach. Our right thumb is on the reel spool; our left hand firmly grasps the end of the thirty-inch spring butt. With a firm sharp sweep we bring the rod straight up and over, stopping the tip just as it comes level with our eyes and the breaking surf, well out in front. The reel spool, released, sings. We watch the bait soar out, out in a beautiful arc and drop into the water just on the edge of the bar. We thumb the spool immediately to prevent a backlash, otherwise known as a “wrinklehawk,” or “birdsnest.”

The tension of the line slackens as the sinker hits bottom. We reel in enough to make the line taut, but not so much as will pull the sinker in nearer. The roll and surge of the tide will do that all too quickly unless our pyramid holds. Minutes pass. Which one of the various fishes (bluefish, bass, skate, dogfish, sand-shark, or flounder) out there in that green and blue water will strike first? A gull sweeps by on steady wings and his shadow passes before us on the

beach, dark and silent, like a hurrying ghost. Trusting sandpipers feed barely five yards away. The bass are not biting today and we will have to wait hours. It will not be the first time; but, again, who wouldn't wait for just one striper?

The surf pounds. Far out on the horizon a three-masted schooner inches along before the light breeze. Then a slackening of the line brings us back to the business in hand. A sudden sharp tug pulls the end of the long rod down; we set our feet and jerk back heartily. He's on. A short rush tells us it is not a bass, but we decide that whatever is on the other end of the line is worthwhile, as he puts up a great battle. Three or four exciting minutes. He tires. We gain line. We have him in close now, and wait for a helping wave to push him up on the beach. As the wave breaks and rushes up the hard-packed sand we pull out the fish along with it to find it's a bluefish, and a beauty. We look him over carefully, admiring the graceful powerful lines of his steel-blue body.

Another cast brings in a skate, an ugly looking fish, shaped like the top of a barrel and having a long, spiny tail. Skates and dogfish are the bane of the surf caster: they chew off the bait, use up valuable time, and are not generally considered edible.

The third cast goes out beautifully, the bait and sinker plunging into the green water well off

shore. We tighten the line and hope that our next strike will be the coveted striper. After the minutes have passed slowly there comes a slight tug. We tighten our hold on the rod and free the reel. With a rush the line starts out. With a he-man heave we set back against the rod, which bows over with the strain of man versus fish. Although we have set the star drag, the first run takes off yard after yard of line. We cannot stop this fellow: he is surely a bass and will make the most of his tremendous speed on the first run. We glance anxiously at the spool, which is shrinking in size all too fast. We thumb the reel, firmly with increasing pressure. The line seems to stretch under the strain. The split bamboo quivers like a stricken thing. But the fish turns and breaks. We hold the tension as our bass flings the spray out into the sun and flashes silvery in the top of a green wave. What a sight! But we have much to think of: will the hook hold?

The fish shakes his head like a bulldog and we brace our feet in the shifting sand to pull him around.

Suddenly the line slackens. We reel frantically and find to our great relief that the fish is still on. We work him in cautiously, giving some, but taking more. Too much haste now will give away a battle almost won, for the first rush is most always the worst.

Even so, we work him carefully, for he has many a trick in his bag. Our wrists and shoulders begin to feel the strain, too, while our fingers seem fairly to have taken root in the rod and reel. But with a short line we watch our chance and when a wave a little larger than the rest curls up to dash to foam on the beach, we urge the bass along with it and in a second have him high and dry. The battle is won. The first striped bass of the season, tipping the scales at twenty-five pounds. He is a real prize, well worth waiting days, if not weeks, for. We slide the fish under a mound of wet seaweed, out of the sun. We re-bait, cast out, and sit down on the warm sand. We glance down the beach and find we are alone. It does a man good to get away like this. We think of the boys back in the city hurrying and scurrying to earn the necessary dollars. Then we look out across the undulating ocean, quiet, unhurried, peaceful and restful. •We breathe deeply, we feel rested, relaxed; life is good.

## HOW TO CAST

From Maine's jagged shoreline, down past the hook of Cape Cod, the long sandy beaches of Jersey, the Carolinas, on around the Florida Peninsula, into the Gulf of Mexico, then up along the Pacific Coast, we'll find bronze-faced rubber-

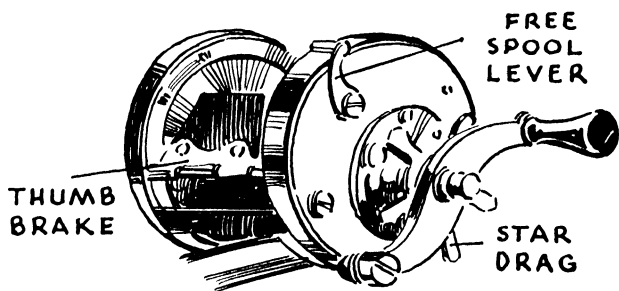
booted men wielding the long rod, the free-spool reel, and various and assorted lures and baits to reach out beyond the breakers for some of the greatest game-fish that exist. Chief among these are the striped bass, the channel bass, the weakfish or sea-trout, the flounder and plaice, the tautog, and that steely colored bunch of dynamite, the bluefish. All are gamesters; all delicious eating; all taken under circumstances which delight the hearts of those who like to feel the freedom of plenty of outdoor elbow room.

But first comes the tackle. Your standard surf rod comes in a single-piece split-bamboo tip of six, six and a half, or seven foot lengths, having an end guide, one intermediate guide (about two feet back from the tip) and the male ferrule. For the short man, we recommend the shorter rod; for the tall and husky, the larger, heavier tip. The butt of the rod averages about thirty inches in length—its comparatively great length being for the purpose of allowing enough space between the hands when casting to get plenty of leverage. The reel is placed well forward toward the joint of the tip and butt sections.

Thanks to modern methods of manufacture, the surf caster's reel, as well as other tackle, is well within the means of the average angler. For example, you can start at \$3 and work up. A very satisfactory reel for surf casting costs no more



than a good bait-casting reel. Even the lowest-priced surf reels come equipped with a free-spool lever, which, by a mere flip of the finger, disengages the handle when casting. This makes for better and smoother casting, as the extra



TYPICAL SURF REEL

weight of the reel handle is eliminated. After the cast is made the gears are enmeshed by the reversal of the conveniently located lever. Another attachment is the star drag: this is actually a brake on the spool which you can set to varying tensions so that there is an extra pull against the fish in addition to that which you exert by the pressure of your thumb. Some surf casters dislike the idea, but for beginners—and personally, for always—we advise it.

Don't make the mistake so many beginners make, namely, buying a line heavy enough to

hold a tuna. Fifteen thread cuttyhunk (linen) is the heaviest you could possibly want, with 12 thread and even 9 thread not being a bit too light. As a matter of fact, the lighter the line the easier it is to cast; it spools better, has less wind



O'SHAUGHNESSY



SPROAT



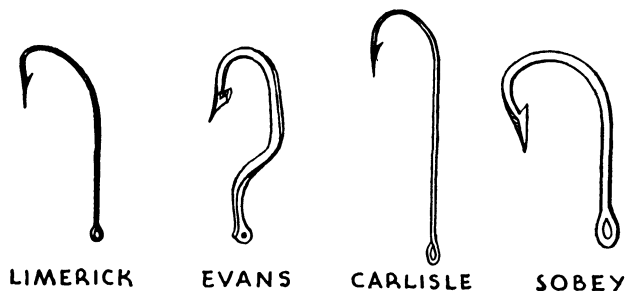
VIRGINIA

resistance. We have settled on the 12 thread as a good happy medium for ease of casting and for necessary strength. Most all cuttyhunks now test three pounds to the thread when wet. And there's a point; before trying to send your lure to Spain—or to Japan, if you are casting off some of those beautiful Pacific Coast beaches—by all means take a few short easy casts and wet your line; you'll suffer fewer backlashes and lose less end tackle.

By the way, just as in bait casting you have to keep a certain amount of thumb pressure on the reel at all times during the cast. Start off easily, get your shoulders and back into it,

give an extra flip of the wrists just before you "let go"; you'll find it is easy to learn with the right tackle. Another suggestion: test your line, several feet back from the end, each trip.

Now that we have told you about the end of the



tackle which you hold, how about the end which the fish grab?

Most important is the hook. Virginia hooks for tautog and O'Shaughnessy hooks for stripers, blues and channel bass; and Carlisle, Limerick or Sproat seem to be the choice for weakfish. We also like the looks of the new Evans type of hook, which is so constructed that it has the barb in direct line with the eye of the hook. If you're fishing where there are bluefish by all means use a wire leader (tinned piano wire); in fact a short leader of wire—about eight inches is enough—is not a bad idea all the time. Blues and small sharks—yes you catch sharks sometimes

right off the beach—can go through a gut leader like a knife through butter. At the top or line end of the leader bend on a barrel swivel; then before you attach the line to the eye of the swivel, slip on a fish finder (at the end of which is your sinker) if you're bait fishing. This fish finder is no more than a smooth eye with several small chain links connecting it to your sinker, and allows the sinker to slide along the line. When you cast, the centrifugal force keeps the sinker down near the bait; when a fish strikes, the line can slide through the fish finder without having the fish feel the sinker until you are ready to strike. A little drop of oil on the swivel from time to time will keep it working and prevent unlaying or untwisting your line should you be casting and retrieving a revolving lure.

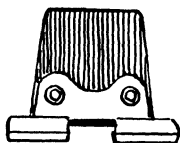
We can get into some terrific arguments on lures and baits; surf casters are as particular about these as the dry fly and plug men. But, without being didactic, suppose that we just suggest a few lures which are steady producers. Among the artificials which will take blues, stripers, and weakfish are the metal squids such as the Belmar, Bent Sand-Eel, Montauk, Ocean Sand-Eel, Butterfish, Diamond, and Cuttyhunk. And there's a new one called the Doc Johnston. All except the last can be picked up at most any sporting goods store carrying salt-water equip-

ment. Of course, the Japanese feather lures are good for the above mentioned fish, but they're tough to cast, are better for trolling. A couple of tricks which will often bring more fish to the beach are to attach a piece of pork rind, blue or red cloth, or strips of light flexible rubber to the hook end of the metal squid to give them a little more lifelike appearance. These metal baits vary from two and one-half to five ounces; the heavier ones cast more easily. As soon as the metal lure hits the water, start to retrieve it. Vary the speed of retrieve to give an erratic motion, much as you would a fresh-water bass plug, or streamer fly. For blues and stripers, keep the metal squid moving right along, as they seem to prefer a faster moving lure.

Of course if you are just practicing casting on the front lawn or in the back lot you do not need any end tackle except a four or five ounce lead sinker. But regardless of your position, when you are casting for a fish or for the end of your practice field, the A B C procedure of casting is the same. Put your left foot forward toward the spot to which you wish to cast; your right foot is back and a bit to the right—very similar to the position you take when you walk up and get set behind a pointing bird dog. Your feet are apart, but just comfortably, so that no one could come along and push you off balance. And while

we're talking about the lower limbs, don't be afraid to flex your knees during the cast—it will give you extra push.

Now grasp the lower end of the rod butt in your left hand (if you're a southpaw, you'll have to reverse all these instructions) and place the right hand up under the reel with your thumb on the reel spool. If your right-hand grip is correct, your hand will be comfortable and in such a position that you can at all times control the pressure on the reel spool or the thumb guard. Then bring the rod back so that the sinker, which



### THUMB BRAKE

is about two feet from the tip end of the rod, is lying on the beach or ground directly in back of you. Your left hand is about parallel with your chin or right shoulder; your right arm is extended straight back; the reel is on the side, turned in toward you. This is where the cast is started.

Bring the rod up, straight up and over, getting all the push you can with your body and arms with a minimum of effort. Just before the rod reaches the perpendicular, you give an extra flip of the wrists to get the necessary snap which will speed the sinker on its way. Just about the time that you snap your wrists you will start to lean forward, and to keep your equilibrium your right

foot will swing out in front of you much in the manner of a baseball pitcher as he finishes his delivery. In short, ever in surf casting you have that well-worn sporting phrase of "follow through" which is known to every golfer, prize-fighter, shot putter, and ball pitcher. The whole procedure should be done easily at the start: remember you are just learning—you're not out to break the world's record of 660 feet, 3 inches.

Most beginners seem to bring their rod too far over in front before they release the thumb pressure which grips the reel spool; this results in the cast diving like a sea-gull into the surf almost at their feet. First thing to correct this fault is to remember to release the thumb pressure on the free-spoiled reel before the perpendicular rod position is reached; another help in correcting down-casting is to aim at the horizon, not directly at the spot where you want your sinker or metal squid to land. The well-made cast soars out, up, and gradually down in a graceful arc.

Be sure to keep your thumb on that reel spool; even when the cast is sailing out you have a very light thumb pressure in effect. When the sinker or lure hits the water (or ground), stop the reel spool at once or you'll find yourself spending the next several minutes untangling a backlash. This thumbing business is a matter of "feel" and patience.

The old trial-and-error method, following the outline above, and remembering above all else to cast easily, will soon get you into the swing of the thing. If you find that a sideswipe, instead of the overhead cast, is easier, I'm not going to tell you that you can't cast that way. You can—and it's a lot easier to some people. After all, we're fishing for fun, not to develop perfect style. But if you're wearing yourself all out in a dozen casts, there's something wrong with your co-ordination. Sit down, light up the old pipe or a cigarette, and see if you can't figure it out.

If you are practicing on a beach where there are other experienced casters, I'll wager that if properly approached they will give you a hand in getting the kinks out of your casting. Naturally, you wouldn't go up to a man when a run of blues, weaks or other surf fish were hitting, but there are many times when an old timer will gladly help a newcomer. And if you'll just watch carefully how easily these surfmen who have had considerable acquaintance with the game wield their long rods, you'll discover many a pointer which will smooth out your own operations more rapidly.

Surf casting is not hard; but it is a lot of fun.



## WET YOUR LINE

While we will set no definite rules on tides we will make a definite statement in regard to wetting down your cuttyhunk line before you really start surf fishing. In the first place you will cut down the number of backlashes by doing this: the line will spool and unspool better; also you increase the strength of the line, as wet cuttyhunk tests more per thread than dry linen.

We have seen many a surf fisherman wet down his line by dunking the entire reel. Surf reels are built to withstand the chemical action of salt water, but we do not believe that you should abuse this fact by dousing the whole reel. It is just as effective to make a couple of short casts—twenty or thirty yards—and lower the tip of the rod after the cast is made so that all the line, from the tip guide to your end tackle, is wet. Then reel back in so that the outer coils of wet line on the spool will bring sufficient water to the reel spool so that it (the water) will soak down into many yards more.

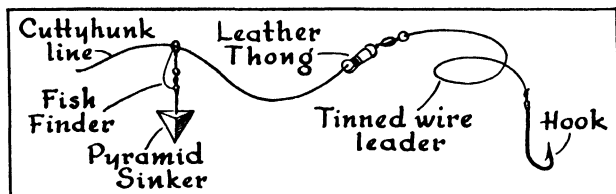
Another way—and we believe that this is the simplest of all—is merely to wade into the edge of the surf and by cupping the hands pour enough water onto the spooled line to soak it thoroughly. Two or three handfuls of water will do this. Even if you are in a hurry to start fish-

ing, take the time to wet down your line, as you'll get more fishing time in the end than if you run the risk of some real old-fashioned backlashes. And you'll also avoid the chance of snapping off a jig or two if you are using 6 or 9 thread.

While on the subject of lines, it's a good time to remind you that a good habit to cultivate is to break off about three feet of line before each trip. The end of your line, where it takes the pressure of casting as well as chafing on the sand, wears rapidly.

## END TACKLE FOR BAIT FISHING

If you will study the illustration on this page, you will have the proper way to rig your hook, leader and sinker without the necessity of our boring or confusing you with too many words. We have already given you some facts on this subject and merely want to add that this same rig is good for bluefish, channel bass, striped bass, weakfish—and of course for those pests of



the sea, dogfish and skates. The reason for the short leader, incidentally, is that a longer one will give the outgoing bait a whirling motion which serves only to wrap the leader around the line. In Chapter 2, under the description of fish or under the Average Tackle Specifications, you will find the proper size hook for whatever species you are seeking.

## WHAT FISH

For convenience sake, we will list the surf fishes by geographical sections, and specify just what fish one may expect to take from the edge of the surf.

The New Englander has in his front dooryard some of the gamest of the surf fishes: striped bass, bluefish, weakfish. In addition he may catch mackerel, herring, and flounders. Occasionally he'll get a real thrill by hooking into a big sand-shark. As there may be an eyebrow or two raised at the mention of herring, we will merely state here that later on in this chapter we will give a more detailed description of how to take herring in a way which will give you added hours of surf sport. Of course, this same region has the seemingly ever-present dogfish and skate.

From New York to Florida is quite a long

stretch of coastline, but throughout the entire length of this section there is many a famous stretch of beach which has made history in surf fishing. Here again we have the blues, stripers and weakfish, and we add another great fighter, the channel bass—whose range is from northern Jersey to and through Florida. We also have those big fluke which to the man who writes menus for restaurants should be translated as “fillet of sole.” Then as we go further south we run into the spotted weakfish, a close cousin of the common weakfish. We also find, although not in very great numbers, the pompano. As our southward travel takes us into Florida we have barracuda, the famous tarpon, the robalo, drum (not to be confused with channel bass) and many another lesser fish, as the tropical seas have a far greater variety of fish than do more northern waters. Not to be omitted from this list of south Atlantic surf fishes are the croaker, and the whiting—which is called kingfish in certain localities.

The Gulf, from Florida across to Texas, can boast some of the finest of surf and salt-water fishing, even though little is heard or written about this section. It has practically all the fish mentioned in the last paragraph with the exception of the striped bass, whose range seems to reach its southern limit at northern Florida.

California is the heart of the surf fishing on the Pacific Coast. Here again the striped bass holds sway, and thousands do tribute to his increasing numbers in this section where he was not a native. To California goes the everlasting credit of protecting the striper with legislation, which will mean that coming generations need have no fear of this fish being commercially exploited to extinction. Incidentally, before you fish in the salt waters of California you need a license. This, to our knowledge, is the only state which requires a special salt-water fishing license—and the cost is very reasonable.

While the striper is now the most coveted surf fish on the West coast there are others which are well worth the taking: salmon, corbina, (mostly at night), weakfish, sharks, jack-crevally, croaker.

In addition, in Washington and Oregon the surf fisherman can find good use for his long rod on the runs of salmon which can be taken there, particularly at the river mouths and inlet entrances.

## HOW TO PLAY

The first advice which is usually shouted at the man who hooks a fish is "Keep that line tight!"—and it is good advice even though it is a little bit like backseat driving to offer instruc-

tions to a man while he is playing a fish. But a tight line is essential, as most all game-fish shake their heads from side to side in an effort to throw the hook—and they can throw the hook a great deal easier when the line is slack.

Another important thing to remember is to keep the rod tip up so that the bend in the rod takes some of the strain off the line: Never point the rod straight at the fish. The bend in the high-held rod is insurance against breaking the line on a sudden lunge of the fish, as part of the shock is taken by the resiliency of the rod. Moreover, the bending of the rod, while it holds the hook firmly, still gives enough so that the hook is not so apt to tear a great gash in the fish's mouth and thence to drop out or even cut completely out.

When you hook a surf fish, do not run back up the beach. This is very unsportsmanlike. Stand your ground and give the fish a fair chance to beat you if he can. Of course, you can follow a big fish along the edge of the surf, and quite often on a big bass this is necessary. But please, oh please, don't run back up the dunes and haul your fish out by sheer force as though he were something you are afraid of.

We've seen many a fish lost in the surf because the angler hated to give his antagonist an inch of line. This is all wrong: the more line you give

a fish—so long as you keep it taut—the more quickly you are going to wear that fish down. No surf fish can long stand hauling seventy to one hundred yards of line through the water. The same principle of fighting big game-fish such as tuna on a long line holds also for the surf fisherman. When he hits the bait and starts off on a long run, let the fish run. If you are fishing for big ones, you should have at least two hundred yards of linen on your reel so that you can follow this practice. Holding a fish too tightly may mean tearing the hook out, breaking the line or the rod—and surely losing the fish.

When you have your fish rolling up on his side is time enough to think about beaching or landing him. It is a great temptation to rush a fish—and a great mistake. The most dangerous part of catching a big fish in the surf is when you draw him into the break of the waves and the backwash of the receding waves. These are critical moments, and if the fish makes a sudden flurry let him run back into deep water—always keeping the line taut and the rod tip up. When the fish is ready to be landed, your percentage of beached fish will be high if you plan the beaching so that you draw the catch in along with a wave; in other words let the action of the incoming wave push the fish along while you pull firmly but gently. Quite a few surf fishermen use

a gaff at this point, but we have never gaffed a surf fish. Somehow we hate to stick a gaff into these game-fish when they can be landed without one. Naturally, if you are on a rocky promontory where the fish has to be lifted directly up, the gaff is the safer method and perfectly legitimate. But where there is a sloping beach, you can, with the help of the waves, work your fish right up onto the beach, where a strong grip of the fingers in the gills is as good as any gaff and a whole lot more sportsmanlike.

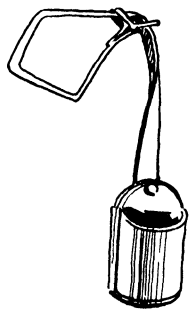
## THE SURF KIT

One of the handiest carry-alls for the odds and ends of tackle necessary for the surf fisherman is an old-fashioned wooden sugar bucket. With a little carpentry, this can be divided into compartments for various items of tackle. The underside of the cover can have some inch-wide strips of leather tacked across so that coils of wire-leaders can be stored here. Around the inside, other strips of leather can be tacked so that pliers, screw driver, bait knife, or metal jigs can be slipped in where they are both handy and easy to find. The bucket complete with cover can be used as a comfortable seat: in fact a little padding covered with canvas makes a very comfortable place to rest the carcass when the legs



get tired during the long days on the beach. Our bucket also has a metal compartment so that bait can be carried inside the bucket, which does away with carrying an extra pail or container for bait. There's plenty of room for an extra line, an extra reel, sinker, hooks and such artificial lures as you may wish to take along.

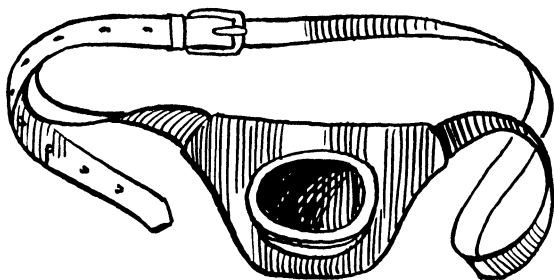
As you get more interested in surf fishing, the chances are good that you will accumulate at least one each of the many kinds of metal jigs. The best way we've found to carry these is in a case made in the following way. Take a piece of light canvas, fifteen inches square; fold six inches of the canvas and sew along each side—you now have a pocket fifteen inches wide and six inches deep with an extra three-inch flap to fold over the top; then sew up the six-inch pocket every inch and a half, thus making the individual compartments, each one deep enough and wide enough to hold a jig. This can be rolled up into a compact unit, and if you want to do the job thoroughly sew a piece of tape onto the outside so that you can tie up the jig roll. This handy container can be made as large or as small

**SURF BUTT REST**

as you wish, of course. A couple of extra safeguards to carry in the surf kit are a can or bottle of reel oil and a stick of cod cement—the latter to refit a tip guide should it work loose during the day.

## ROD BELT

We usually put our rod belt in the surf kit as soon as we take it off, as there is nothing so awkward as trying to hold the long-butted surf rod



## LEATHER BUTT REST

without this leather belly and crotch protector. There are quite a wide variety of these rod rests on the market: some are merely a leather cup large enough to hold the rod butt; others are a leather-covered metal plate, V-shaped with a thick leather cup in the center. The best one in our humble opinion is like a small leather apron

about a foot wide across the top and tapering down to a pocket for the rod butt. Take your choice as to the shape but by all means have one, as you can seriously injure your abdomen, particularly if you play a heavy fish, if you try to surf fish without this accessory. Incidentally, the rod rest with its waist belt has served us more than once when we ran the belt through the gills of our fish so we could sling them over our back on the way across the dunes off the beach. These butt rests are standard equipment obtainable at any sporting goods store.

## PROTECTION FROM WIND, WEATHER AND SUN

### Sun-Glasses:

Probably there is no outdoor sport which subjects the eyes to more glare than surf fishing. You not only have no shade, but in addition to the direct rays of the sun, you have the reflected light from the water and the white shimmer of the beach. If you do not have a "decent" tan when you start your season's surf fishing, by all means keep covered up, as in the excitement of fishing you can forget or fail to realize how burned you are getting, with very uncomfortable results.

There are many types of lenses which will pro-

tect the eyes, but whatever you choose, do not buy cheap "two-bit" glasses. Get ground lenses, colored to suit your fancy. Good glasses are obtainable for as little as just under two dollars.

### Footwear:

The choice of footgear depends upon the person and the season. On most any stretch of popular surf beach you will find some wearing sneakers, some barefoot, some with rubber hip-boots, and others wearing waders such as are well known on trout streams and are finding favor among early spring and late fall surfmen. Hip-boots with surf pants—waterproofs which come down to the knee and worn outside the boots—make a fine combination in late fall or in a nor'easter.

## WHERE TO CAST

Most all surf fish have the same general feeding grounds, so it is not too difficult to find where to cast when you are working the surf. In the first place there are many famous spots which are well known and which for years have produced their share of the near-shore gamesters. But unless we miss our guess there will be many a beginner who reads this book—and not a few who are well versed in other phases of fishing—who will want to know where to cast on some beach which does not have the favorite holes and

sloughs marked by the footprints of other anglers.

There are many ways in which you can find surf fish, and they are all very simple, calling only for observance on the part of the fisherman. The most reliable method is to watch the gulls and terns. When they are flocked up and feeding and diving, it is a certainty that they have found schools of small bait. What is food for gulls is food also for fish. Watch the diving birds and more often than not you'll see swirls made by larger fish than bait. Cast your metal squid or your bait to the far side and reel it back through the bait: you'll be pretty apt to have a strike if the game-fish are really there. This method is famous for bluefish and not at all uncommon for weaks, stripers and those big mackerel.

There will be many a time when the observant fisherman will not see the gulls but will catch perhaps only a single swirl in the expanse of waves off the beach. Keep your eyes open for breaking fish at all times. It will often mean the difference between failure and success.

At other times, the surf caster will see neither gulls nor swirls to direct his cast. However if you'll remember that the surf fish like to lie in the deep holes along the edges of the bar, you'll work your metal or other artificial lures through these deeper holes, which are usually distin-

guishable by the darker color of the water. At low tide, surf fish will often lie in these holes and then work up onto the bar when the incoming tide gives sufficient depth. Another way to tell where the bars are is to watch the action of the waves: where there is a shallow spot the waves will raise up or perhaps break, while in the deeper water the waves will keep their same continuity and height.

Since the action of the water is continually changing the formation of the beaches, what may be a deep, fish-productive hole one year may be a shallow fishless spot the next. A study of waves and water action will tell the story like an open book once the eye has become accustomed to reading the messages. One of the most easily distinguishable water characteristics is the tide-rip which usually occurs where there is a definite and sharp change of water depth. This rip is no more than a current—or a meeting of currents—and usually can be told by the ruffles of the water, or perhaps in the stronger rips by eddies like those in a fast moving stream. Along the edge of such rips is a good spot for the surf caster to fish, as the action of the water churns out bait from the bottom. Or bring small baitfish along for the convenience of the feeding gamefish.

## WATCH FOR KELP

We've noticed many a time that it's the surf fisherman who keeps fishing who catches more fish than the man who heaves out his bait, sticks his rod butt in the sand spike, and then goes to sleep. You have to keep working at fishing to get it done properly just as at any other line of endeavor. The man who stays awake and keeps trying invariably picks up new ideas and information which might otherwise pass unnoticed. Here's a good case in point.

One week-end several of us were fishing along the sandy shore of the Cape and took only four small bass. Rather than let the fish dry out in the sun, we cleaned and scaled them as they were taken. Opening their stomachs we found that all of them had been feeding—and apparently just before they had been hooked, as no digestion had set in—on very small mussels ( $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long) and tiny shrimps (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long). We thought at the time that this was mighty small pickings for such good feeders as stripers.

Just before leaving, one of the party hooked into a mass of kelp and seaweed and hauled it up on the beach. As he was disentangling his hook, he called us over to look at the mass of weeds. Examination showed this kelp to be

crammed full of both shrimps and mussels, plus one small crab.

The next day we were talking with Henry Moore, of the Boston *Herald*, and he told us an interesting story about quite a few of the fish he had taken in the surf this summer. The gist of his story was that about 75 percent of the fish he had caught had been hooked as his drail or metal squid came past floating kelp. After he had caught one or two this way by accident he made a point to cast over and past such weed masses and not infrequently took fish alongside of other anglers who were using the same lure but who were purposely avoiding the kelp mats for fear of getting hung up.

The stomach contents of the bass mentioned, the examination of the kelp itself, and Henry's verification through his own experience this summer, is triple proof that the surf caster will do well to watch for such floating patches and cast near them.

## TIME OF THE TIDE

There is a general rule among salt-water fishermen that the incoming or flood tide is the best fishing time. This is true only to a certain degree. Remember that there are many other things which govern the biting of fish: water tem-



perature, water depth, possibly wind direction and velocity, and presence of bait plus the disposition of the fish. We have caught striped bass up to forty pounds at the last of the ebb; we have caught them, in fact, at all tide stages at one particular stretch of surf. Our theory on tides, if we must have one, is that the angler will do well to fish every stage of the tide. We do believe that the change of tide does help as the action of the flow of water tends to work out crustacea from the bottom, put the bait fish on the move, and make conditions easier for the game-fish to feed.

Naturally, there are places where a certain time of the tide is necessary to produce good fishing. For instance, there are places which are mere sand and mud flats, entirely out of water at low tide, which produce some excellent fishing when the tide has come in sufficiently to allow the fish to work in over the flats, chasing the bait which moves inshore as the tide floods. Also, in many of the tidal inlets the best fishing is from half flood to half ebb—a period of six hours, as each tide takes six hours approximately to run its course.

You will pretty much have to work out your own timing on tides as every place does have different characteristics. Therefore, if we are to offer a suggestion which will help you catch more

fish, we will merely repeat that you should devote your time to active fishing rather than laying off because the tide is supposedly "wrong." As a friend of ours puts it: "You'll never catch a fish unless your bait or lure is in the water."

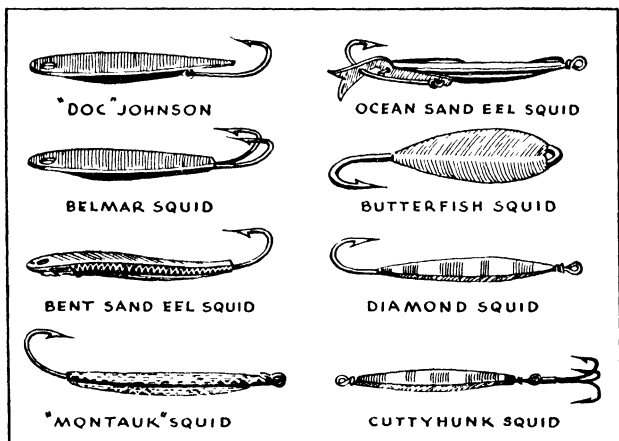
Before we leave the subject of tides we would like to mention that we have had a lot of sport with John Knight's Solunar Theory. Knight has worked out a time-table for fish which tells exactly to the minute when you can expect the best fishing each day of the year. A very simple key enables you to apply the table to your own particular section. We mention this Solunar Table for we believe that in working it out Knight has taken the pull of the tide into consideration—and the table is surprisingly exact.

## METAL SQUIDS

One of the oldest and most reliable of artificial lures used by the surf caster is the metal squid or jig. Another name for this lure is drail. These squids vary in size and shape and undoubtedly originated to imitate various kinds of bait fish. Thus we have the bent sand-eel, the Belmar, the Butterfish, Diamond, Montauk, Cuttyhunk, and lately a host of new ones from one ounce up to five ounces.

Some of the later designs come in the bright

untarnishable finishes which remain shiny. The majority of them however need to be scraped with a knife or rubbed down with sandpaper or steel wool to bring out the flash and brilliance which helps attract fish.



Almost without exception these jigs are increased in fishtaking efficiency by adding a piece of pork rind to the hook. This gives them an extra wiggle, which means extra fish on the beach. Just recently we found ourselves on the beach without any pork rind. This gave us a chance to test out the theory that a two-inch piece of white, blue or red cloth will serve as a good substitute. As we had on an old blue shirt, we did not

mind sacrificing a short half-inch-wide strip of our shirt tail—and we caught just as many bass as one of the boys down the beach who had not forgotten his pork rind. However, pork rind is tougher and longer lasting. Incidentally, most pork rinds come in three-inch strips; cut off at least an inch and you will reduce the number of short-striking, unhooked fish. However, if you can get the full-length strips with a tail hook set well back in the pork rind, this is even better.

There is considerable discussion among surf casters as to whether the jigs with a swinging tail hook are better than those with the fixed, immovable hook. The idea is that a big fish has something against which to pry and tear with the fixed hook jig, which may result in a torn mouth and his getting away; whereas with the swinging hook he does not get that leverage.

A whole book could be written concerning the color of metal squids. Most all of the standard old-timers are silver in color, but with recent developments there has been much experimentation with various colors such as blue, green, yellow and black. All these colors will take fish at times. The best advice we can give is to have several squids of different colors in your kit so that you can use them as occasion demands.

Only a short time ago we were fishing for striped bass, which were exceedingly fussy as to

what they would hit. We could see thousands of the fish up on the bars, but they refused most every lure in our kits. Finally we caught one of them and immediately opened his stomach to see what these fish were feeding on. We found the stomach crammed full of sand-eels of about five-inch length. This gave us something to work upon. Back at the camp we found the remnants of an old can of Cape Cod Green paint, which was put into use to color a long thin metal jig. The next day this jig did noble service by taking a half-dozen stripers in less than a dozen casts. This experiment is given not to boast, but to serve as an example of what application of facts can do to increase your fish-catching ability. A thoroughly experienced fisherman of our acquaintance has stated that he believes that the shape and size of the artificial lure offered is as important as the lure's color and action. The painted green jig is good proof that this theory is right, as in this case we were trying to imitate the sand-cel with a jig that in addition to being the right size and shape, also had the color and action—four essential qualities.

## RODS AND REELS

The regulation surf rod and reel has been fairly well described in the section on tackle:

thirty-inch butt with its length to give space enough between the hands to allow the necessary leverage for casting is standard; also the six, six-and-a-half, and seven foot tips are standard lengths. The reel will vary in size but will always have a free spool and will usually—but not always—be equipped with a star drag and thumb-stall. Most surf reels have a ratio of three to one: that is, three turns of the spool to every single turn of the reel handle. However, there are several reels on the market with a ratio of four to one, which means that you can reel much faster. These four-to-one reels are really better for squidding—casting and retrieving as in fresh-water bait casting—as in the majority of cases the surf fish will more frequently hit a faster moving jig.

However, there is a great deal of experimentation going on at the present time due to the increased interest in lighter tackle. Down in Jersey there is a definite turn to lighter surf-casting equipment with the more avid anglers going to a light six-ounce tip about seven and a half feet long, a small reel (often a fresh-water bait-casting type), and, believe it or not, sewing thread for line. The delicacy of this outfit is best expressed by stating that the breaking test of the thread is only three pounds. This is, to our way of thinking, getting too far down into the light-

tackle stage for general practical fishing by the average man. However, there is a happy medium in a rod which is becoming popular in New England: the six-foot tip weighs about five ounces, balances well with 6 thread cuttyhunk and one of the lighter surf reels which have fast aluminum spools and will carry about two hundred yards of 6 thread. This rod is designed to handle one to two ounce jigs and gives the angler twice the fun with surf fish under fifteen pounds as compared to the sport he would have with the same fish on the actually too-heavy regulation surf outfit.

Another development is the use of longer surf rods—(most popular in California, where the average cast is longer than on the Atlantic) combined with the light, fast reels and 6 or 9 thread line.

The choice of rod then is not by any means limited to the regulation surf outfit. You can pick and choose according to your own particular fancy.

### EXTRA ROD

During the past few years we have taken an extra rod along with us on our surf-fishing trips. This practice has resulted in some of the best sport we've had along the beach.

Our "extra" rod is a split bamboo with six-foot tip, weighing about five ounces, and a twenty-

one-inch butt. We use two hundred yards of 6 thread cuttyhunk spooled on a light, four-to-one ratio salt-water reel. Our lures are one-ounce metal jigs and other artificials which are heavy enough to cast. When using flies or other very light artificials, they can be converted into castable lures by pinching several small sinkers onto the line about a foot and a half ahead of the lure.

On this rod we have taken stripers up to fifteen pounds, mackerel, small flounders when using bait (sea-worms), herring on small streamer flies, and other small fish which occasionally run into the surf. If the big fellows are not hitting, you can turn many a dull day into one full of excitement with this extra, light tackle outfit.

And if you have never caught those big pound-and-a-half to two-pound herring on light tackle, you still have a treat in store for you. They hit like a bolt of lightning; they will jump like a salmon—and unless you handle them with kid gloves—gently, in other words—you'll have trouble landing them. Mackerel will also put up a remarkable fight on light tackle. And a ten-pound striper on this outfit will give you some thrills that could never be obtained from the same size fish on the heavier surf outfit.



## SPORTSMANSHIP

There are a good many unwritten rules which govern the conduct of surf fishermen. Foremost of these is that the man who gets to a favorite spot first is not to be crowded in upon. There is usually plenty of room along any beach or stretch of rocks and it is mighty poor sportsmanship to move in too close. If several men are fishing together, the distance between them when they take their stand is entirely up to them. However, don't chisel in so close to another angler that he doesn't have elbow room.

Many a time when an angler hits into a big channel bass or striper, the fish will run parallel to the beach. If you happen to be standing next to such a person, by all means get your line in and out of the way. Big fish are hard enough to catch without handicapping the angler by tangled lines.

As a rule there is a real feeling of fraternity among surf fishermen. We've seen many a case where a party with plenty of bait would give some of their surplus. Not infrequently the loan of a metal squid, a sinker and hook, or even an extra reel will help a fellow fisherman enjoy a day which might otherwise be a total loss to him through some unexpected misfortune.

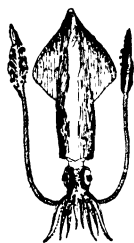
## LIVE BAIT

Live baits for the surf fishes are numerous. Summer or winter squids are great striper baits, as are soft-shell crabs, live small eels, big chubs or minnows, sea clams, sea-worms and blood worms, even small clams at times when nothing better can be found. Menhaden or mackerel are popular for stripers at times; use a chunk (take out the bones) about the size of an egg. For channel bass, mostly bottom feeders, menhaden, clams, squids, mullet and shedder crabs are good reliable baits. For weakfish, the metal squids and other artificial lures (they'll hit streamers and plugs); they'll take live bait such as minnows, shrimps, shedder crabs, mullet and squids. Tautog, to the best of our knowledge, will not hit at artificials but will nudge down sharply (and you have to set back at once) on crabs and fiddlers as well as on the big periwinkles and clams.

## SQUIDS

Often called inkfish, as their main means of protection is ejecting an inky, blue-black fluid which discolors the water and gives them a chance to hide from their many enemies. Other names: sea arrow, winter or bone squid, summer squid. Looks like an octopus with an elongated

body. Squids propel themselves by intaking and expelling water. Travel forward or backwards with equal rapidity. Inside the mouth, which is surrounded with tentacles from two to six inches in length, there is a sharp hard beak like that of a hawk, which is used to tear their food into consumable bits. Their tentacles are fitted with suction plates so that they can hold their prey such as the fry of herring and other fishes, upon which they wreak great havoc.



SQUID

Squids have accounted for some of the largest stripers taken on the Atlantic Coast. The writer has also caught bluefish, skates, dogfish, sharks, flounders and tautog while using this bait. The head is considered by many as the best striped bait. Others prefer to use triangular pieces (an inch across the base and about three or four inches long) of the body, while still other anglers use whole ones. The writer, for several seasons preferred the summer squid (boneless and smaller on the average), but after seeing many bass taken on the winter species, it is apparently a toss-up between the two. Size of bait, of course, depends upon the size of run of fish.

This bait can be obtained from the bait shops, commercial pound or trap fishermen, or at times can be picked up along the shore in the early

morning, if you can beat the gulls to those squids which have become stranded during the night, when they seem to be particularly active.

Keeping whole squids is considerable of a problem during the hot-weather months. The best method yet discovered by the author is to fill an ordinary round cracker tin (one of those that hold about two quarts) with fresh squids; lay a piece of newsprint across the top and then put on the cover. The extra space taken by the paper will make the fit airtight. Place in the refrigerator and do not open until you are ready to use. In this manner we have extended our bait supply for several days over any other method yet found. If no ice is available, wrap the excess bait in newspapers and place on the ground in the coolest spot available—this method is not good for much over twenty-four hours. However, by cleaning the squids, and salting thoroughly, this bait can be kept for quite a number of days in the brine—which also tends to toughen the flesh. This is good bait for channel bass also.

## BLOODWORMS

Often called clam-worms; sometimes known as white-worms, sea-worms, or muck-worms.

Even as the angle-worm is “tops” with fresh-water fishermen for all-round use, so the blood-

worm has come into prominence as a sure lure for many types of salt-water fishing. Used in connection with a small spinner, this rather unattractive-looking worm is probably one of the deadliest baits for stripers, weakfish, etc. In fact, quite a thriving enterprise has sprung up in the selling of bloodworms, to the extent that thousands of them are shipped from Maine and other points to New York and numerous other central fishing localities.



SEAWORM

If you prefer to get your own bait, and if you live somewhere near the shore between northern Maine and southern New York, you can dig these worms out of the mud with a clam hoe.

The best way to keep them is to pack them in damp rockmoss or seaweed; keep the moss wet with salt water and place them on the cellar floor, in the refrigerator, or other cool places. If you are trying to hold them over for several days, be sure to remove the dead ones daily.

In baiting the single hook with these worms, insert the point about an inch in back of the head, slide the worm up the hook enough so that the barb and bend is covered; then bring the hook outside, have an outside loop of about two inches and put the hook through the worm again; as

most of the worms will average about six to eight inches in length, this will leave about three or four inches (depending on the size of the hook) dangling. Some anglers use two or three worms at a time if fishing for larger fish. And you'll have no trouble finding out which is the head end as the bloodworm has an efficient pair of nippers on this extremity.

While fishing, keep your worms out of the sun—they'll live longer. Dead worms may serve as bait occasionally, but the live ones have a better fish-taking record. If you are carrying them in a gallon tin (with holes punched in top and bottom for ventilation) turn the can upside down about every hour or so as otherwise the worms will work down through the rockweed, ball up and cut each other with their sharp nippers. Turning the can prevents this.

On one day's trip trolling for stripers around close to the shore of a rocky island in Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts, we have taken not only stripers but also cunners (sea perch, chogshet), tautog, scup, and balloon fish—good proof of the fish-taking ability of the sea-worm.

For striped-bass fishing, one of the most taking combinations in inlets and harbors, including marsh creeks, is a six-foot leader of heavy gut (at least fifteen-pound test) attached to a northern spinner (narrow, pointed at both ends,

revolves on its own axis) ; behind the spinner rig two single hooks, one of which should be right behind the spinner with the lower hook about four inches behind it; hook the head of the clam-worm on the upper hook, do not insert the lower hook which is about five inches back; merely let the worm trail alongside. This back hook will take those short-striking fish.

### SHEDDER CRABS

All common crabs go through an annual molting stage when they shed their hard shells so that they can grow. During this period they are protected by a soft shell which is easily bent or twisted by the fingers. Blue crabs at this stage are considered a great delicacy by human beings. Apparently, the game-fish of the bays and shoreline appreciate them even more when in this condition, as "shedder" crabs are one of the leading baits for most all types of salt-water fishing. Shedders can be bought in most coastal cities from bait dealers and vary in price according to abundance. One dollar a dozen is not an unusual price unless you can contact the crab catchers in the shallow bays and tidal creeks where they ply their trade—if so, you can get them at a lower price. Or if you have a dip net, or set a line

baited with old fish-heads you can get your own supply—and it's fun in the bargain.

If you buy your bait, do not let the dealer pass on any dead ones to you; they are not "just as good." And watch out for those claws when handling them—a good-sized crab can give you a mean bite. Pick up by both claws and wrench these off with a quick sidewise twist; if the crab is so active that you can't get both claws simultaneously, pick it up by the back and *from* the back. Crack the under shell with the handle of your knife; then crack the top side and continue operations until the whole shell is removed with the crab intact. If you cut the shedder crosswise you will get a bait which will cling to the hook better as the grains of the flesh or meat run that way. Use half a crab for stripers, big weaks, blues and channel bass; for small weaks, croakers, kingfish, etc., smaller pieces can be used.

Pack shedder crabs in moist—not soaking wet—grass when fishing and put in cool dark place (ice box or cellar floor) overnight. With good treatment they'll last several days.

## MENHADEN

The menhaden is also known as pogie, blue-back, and mossbunker, the last used so often by the offshore bluefish fleet. A strong oily fish, the



mossbunker is in great demand by rod-and-reel fishermen as an all-round good lure for blues, weaks, channel bass, stripers, plaice, etc.

As the flesh is very soft a few turns of thread around the hook after it has been baited will help in keeping it on the hook. Use a good-sized hunk for the larger fishes. Many anglers take out the backbone and then slice the flesh to suit their individual fancy. Toss all the waste parts overboard or into the surf as this forms a slick on the water and attracts fish. Chumming of this kind is always helpful in beach or tideway fishing as fish seem to follow uptide after more of what has drifted down to them.

## MULLET

Here is one of the most popular of baits for the surf fisherman. The mullet we have in mind is the little silvery fellow which barely ever exceeds five or six inches in length and which forms such an important food for all our coastal game-fish during August and September.

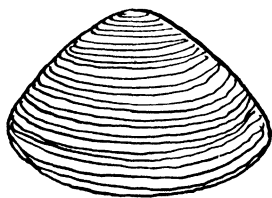
The metal squid is really made to imitate the mullet and when the game-fish are feeding on this particular diet, the metal squid will account for many a good striper, weak and blue fish.

Some anglers catch their own mullet by using

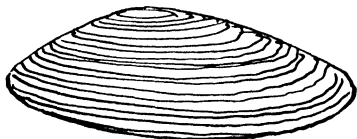
a cast net, but they can also be obtained from the baitman.

## CLAMS

The plain word “clam” will conjure up a great variety of shellfish in the minds of anglers located at different points along the coast. Some will think of the quahog, the round hard-shelled clam which makes a good chowder, and when small is so often served under the names of cherrystone or little-neck at exorbitant prices in our best restaurants. Others will think of the more common clam with its softer, more brittle shell; still again there will be anglers who will think



• QUAHAUG •



• CLAM •

of the big sea clam, commonly known as the skimmer, which is found along the outside beaches after a storm—if you can get there before the gulls and other sea birds clean them up.

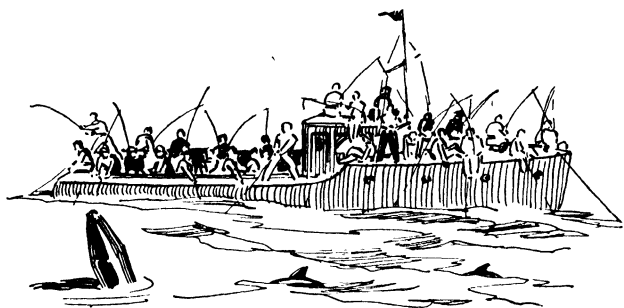
Of these three, the skimmer clam offers more as a bait since it is of

larger size and has a more substantial rim and hard muscular parts to stay on the hook. Most any bottom fish from strippers (at times) to the winter flounders will take these baits, which are always available and often have to substitute for more popular lures.

The best way to use the skimmer is to cut it out whole from the shell. Use a long-bladed thin knife such as a kitchen paring knife. Take the meat of the clam; insert in a mesh such as an onion bag—some prefer the women's hairnets obtainable from the five and dime stores; use enough mesh to cover the clam; insert hook; sew up and bind by sewing through eye of the hook.

## SARDINES

On the Pacific coast where they are plentiful, sardines are one of the most popular baits. Always available at the boat market or from the large bait barges, which have their live-tanks filled with them.



## Chapter 4

### FROM THE BOTTOM UP

**M**ISUNDERSTANDING Number One about salt-water fishing is the feeling that it is a rich man's sport. Let's once and for all explode this misconception. When you can step out on the beach and for a dollar and a half's worth of tackle and two-bits' worth of bait catch anything from flounders up to the lordly striped bass, you can hardly call it expensive. All of which reminds me of one day last summer when three of us were surf fishing with rods and reels, and things were pretty slow. Several hours of fishing had brought only one or two small fish to the beach. Our only satisfaction—and there is a good deal in it too—lay in the fact that we were laying out good long casts with a minimum of

backlashes. There really is a considerable pleasure in seeing the long white line flow out, up over and down in a graceful arc behind the bulleting squid, but this day it had no appeal for the fish.

About noon, a fellow who had seen a few more years than the three score and ten, came over the dunes carrying a handline and one piece of bait. He positioned himself about thirty yards down the beach, baited his hook, swung the sinker and bait around his head a couple of times, and let her go. The bait and leader traveled barely over the first breaker, but the old fellow seemed satisfied and took up the slack. Hardly had he done so when we saw him dig in his heels as the line tightened and cut through the water. Inch by inch the oldster gained line and with a final heave pulled a thirty-five-pound striped bass up on the beach. He gave us a nod and grin, slung the fish over his shoulder and went back over the dunes. We exchanged rather blank expressions—and then, appreciating the humor of the situation, laughed long and heartily.

This is not proof that a handline is better than a rod and reel for striped bass, because such is not the case. But it does prove that the average man can afford to go salt-water fishing if he can afford to go fresh-water fishing. In fact, in a great many cases your heavy fly rod or fresh-water

bait-casting or trolling rod is just exactly the thing for salt-water fishing. Flounders, sea perch or cunners, snapper blues, tomcod, small school weakfish or stripers and a host of other near-shore fish can be taken from bridges, riverbanks, or rocks as well as from rowboats (usually available at the cost of a dollar per day). For these fine fish you very definitely do not want heavy rods and reels. You can get a special salt-water rod built for light trolling or still fishing, but it is not necessary if you have a fairly good assortment of fresh-water tackle already on hand. The point is that you should not let the lack of ownership of salt-water tackle prevent you from tasting the extra food and fun which these smaller but able salt-water fish can give you.

There is another phase of salt-water fishing which is well worth mentioning here; we refer to the party boats which run daily from some ports and in most places on every Saturday, Sunday and holiday during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. As a rule, the cost per person is a dollar, which on some of the larger boats accommodating from fifty to one hundred includes a fish chowder for lunch and lemons to suck if you have a squeamish stomach. Many boats which will accommodate fifteen or twenty—if you dislike the idea of being a bit cramped on elbow room—could be rented for the day by

you and your friends so that the cost per person could be controlled by the number in your own party. This is a lot of fun, as a matter of fact, as we know of nothing which will give greater relaxation than a good gang of guys all fishing from the same boat. The spirit of competition inevitably arises and if you want to get up a pool for the biggest fish, the first fish of the day, the last fish of the day, the smallest fish and also a high rod, someone is going to get "his bait back" and if only a dime or so is chipped in by each member, there's no harm done to anyone's pocketbook. Parties of this kind usually go off-shore and bottomfish for tautog or blackfish, sea bass, porgie, pollock, cod, haddock, hake in the northern Atlantic and for the various other species that can be taken deep in the South and in the Pacific.

As a matter of fact when you compare the cost of fresh-water fishing with that of salt-water fishing, it seems to us that those who live within a hundred miles or so of the coastline will find the latter type of fishing less expensive, just as much fun, and offer even a wider variety of food to the successful angler.

Many fresh-water anglers think that a trout is fast when he hits a fly, but let him take his same tackle and try the run of snapper blues and he'll really see a fish that takes his food with

speed and vigor. The black-bass fisherman thinks he has had some good solid strikes on his bait-casting rod, but when he uses the same tackle and has a five-pound striper or bluefish strike, he'll begin to wonder why he's missed this salt-water fishing "all these years." Add to this the rhythmic sway of the boat, the keenness of the salt breeze, the screaming of the gulls, and sometimes acres of fish breaking the surface all around you—and you will begin to realize that the call of the sea is a strong one—and one which you should not deny.

### PIER, PARTY BOAT, AND BRIDGE

Following up our contention that salt-water fishing is not a rich man's sport exclusively—far from it in fact—we point out the thousands of anglers who seek solace, thrills and food from bridges and piers as well as from party boats.

The bridge fisherman is as avid an angler as anyone. We know of a certain bridge over a tidal inlet where the bridge anglers braved the Sunday main-highway traffic, week after week, with their handlines and their rods. In fact, the congestion became so bad that the town fathers finally passed a law making it an offense to fish off this particular bridge. We point this out not as the type of bridge to seek for your fishing but

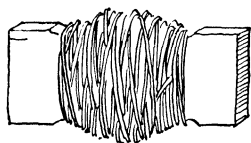


as an example of the interest which these fishermen have in the pursuit of the many kinds of game and food fish which run into the tideways and inlets in all coastal parts of the country. The ideal set-up is some bridge on a back road or little-traveled highway where there is a degree of peace and seclusion. We know many of them that have plenty of the necessary atmosphere as well as good fishing. Usually when building a bridge, the engineers dig out a deep hole under and on both sides, and when the bottom gets back its natural growth this is an attractive spot for almost every salt and brackish water fish, from white perch to striped bass, or the innumerable other fish which change as you travel in different parts of the country.

## HANDLINES

Your tackle for this type of fishing can be merely a handline. However, be sure to get one which will not snarl when it drops in coils at your feet. The tarred lines are excellent, but if you need a lighter one we suggest that you peruse the catalogs of the line companies or the counter of your local sporting goods or hardware store. Do not buy a cuttyhunk, enameled or bait-casting line. If you do not need the strength of the tarred

lines, get a braided or twisted cotton line. Depending upon the height of the bridge, the depth of the water and the size of the fish sought, the length of your handline will vary. We'd set a minimum of twenty-five yards for any type of bridge fishing: this will give you enough surplus to allow for breaking, and faster wear on the fishing end, which necessitates breaking off the worn end occasionally.



· HAND LINE ·

As most handlines come in coils, we suggest that you take an inch-thick piece of pine board about six inches long and four inches wide. Take your fishing knife and starting an inch in from each end cut down at least a half inch along each side. Then with a nail punch a hole in the middle of this board. Run the line through the hole and then tie enough knots in the end of the line so that it cannot be pulled through. After this, wind the line around the board or "reel." The hooks can be stuck into the end of the pine board (hence the specification for a soft wood), all of which makes an easily portable unit, and one which will not snarl and tangle.

## PIER FISHING

The fishing pier—either a pier erected for that purpose, or any pier or breakwater which juts far enough from shore to reach the haunts of in-shore salt-water fishes, is an important factor in the average man's fishing activity. Atlantic City has given real tribute to the pier fisherman by building what has become known as the "million dollar fishing pier." But there is also many a time-blackened boat dock or commercial pier which has served the additional purpose of enabling the handliner or the rod and reeler to get out where the fun begins.

Here again the handline comes into prominence for those who do not prefer the sportier method of rod and reel. Incidentally, in rigging the handline there are—as in all other forms of fishing—two (or more) schools of thought. One group holds that the best way is to put the sinker at the very end of the line and then place the one or two hooks (here again is something which is up to personal choice) so that they will hang about six inches to a foot above the sinker. The other group places the hooks a foot below the sinker. We personally favor the former way of rigging, as we believe that it allows the fisherman to feel each nibble, no matter how slight,

more quickly and thus gives him a better chance to set the hook.

For rod and reel fishing, you will find specific information on tackle immediately following the description of salt-water game-fish in the chapter devoted to that subject.

A real bit of sage advice on handlining appeared in a new weekly salt-water newspaper this past summer. With the author's permission, and believing it well worthy of repeating here, we quote from the article: *Handliners Catch Fish for Food and Fun*.\*

What stillfishing is to fresh-water angling, handlining is to fishing in the salt water. Both methods of catching fish are scorned to some degree, the former by dry-fly purists and the latter by heave-and-haul surf casters, yet each rates as good fun, and each is an effective method of catching fish.

Squid-tossers to the contrary, there is more to handlining than throwing a line overboard and hauling it up again with a fish attached to its nether end. This writer has fished from party boats when the fellow next to him caught three fish to his one, fishing with the same kind of line and hook and the same kind of bait in the same area of water. He has also hauled in fish joyously when the fellow alongside couldn't get as much as a touch.

Since most handline fish are bottom feeders, it is essential that the bait be fished very close to the bottom. Let your handline down until the sinker touches

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\* By Horace G. Tapply, in *Salt Water Sportsman*, June 8, 1939.

bottom, measure off the distance between sinker and hook and haul in the line that much, then pull in another foot or two to keep the bait just clear of weeds, mud and rocks.

Any old handliner will tell you that you will get more bites if you keep your bait moving. Lift the line an arm's length and let it fall back almost until it touches bottom, lift it again, and continue until a fish interrupts the procedure. By doing this you will also discourage small and undesirable fry from stealing your bait.

Other fish such as the pollock do not remain as close to the sea floor as some. But when the pollocks are in evidence, more of them will be taken if you fish the middle depths, from ten feet off bottom to ten feet from the surface. A little experimentation will tell you where the greatest concentration of pollock is. When you find it, mark the proper depth with a knot or a small piece of white twine.

Like the Scotchman who, when he borrows a pipeful of tobacco, crams the bowl so full he can't draw through it, many party boat fishermen try to load their hooks with all the bait they will hold just because the bait is free. This does not always pay. The skipper of the boat will be glad to show you how to bait the hook so it won't be stolen or fall off when you lower it to the bottom. And don't try to heave your line as far from the boat as it will go, because it will often throw the bait off your hook, and besides, no matter how far you throw it, the bait will eventually come to rest directly beneath where you're fishing. Lower it gently, and it will reach bottom just as quickly and with its full quota of bait intact.

Many handliners wait until they get a good solid tug before trying to set the hook, but the most effective method is to pull at every "touch." Small fish may be nipping at your bait, and if allowed to feast

without interruption will strip the hook in record time. And if a big fish comes along, he'll gobble bait, hook and all at one gulp. Give 'em the barb every bite you get and you'll save more bait and land more fish.

The opinion of salt-water purists to the contrary, there is a certain amount of skill involved in bringing a fish up from the bottom to where it can be reached with the gaff. When you set the hook and feel a heavy, lively weight down below, haul in hand over hand and keep him coming! Some fish will bore down when hooked, others will swim up with the intake of line; either way a steady pull upwards will keep the hook seated. If the fish is a good one—say ten pounds or better—don't hesitate to call for the gaff. Hold the fish just under the surface on a taut line and let the gaffman do the rest of the work.

The New England coastline is all good for bottom fishing, from Rhode Island north along the entire coast of Maine. Party boats can be hired at from \$1 to \$2 per person, and shucked clams are included free; some party boat skippers also dish out free chowder and coffee.

The variety of fish that will come into a party boat is almost infinite. In New England alone, cod and pollock are the reliables, although halibut, flounders, haddock, red or rock cod, tautog, cunners (sea perch), dogfish, skates, sculpin, puffers, hake, and cusk will all come aboard at one time or another.

## PARTY BOAT FISHING

The phrase "party boat" is a rather broad one which takes quite a wide choice. It may mean the dory or skiff which you can hire in a great many places for a dollar a day; you provide your

own power to take you offshore from a few hundred yards to a mile or more—and the power may be an outboard or merely pairs of oars which you yourselves manipulate. It can also mean a twenty to forty foot power-boat with captain which you charter for your own party of friends—and this is a lot of fun—with the cost of from \$15 to \$40 a day being divided among the crowd. Some states are now getting out lists which give complete information on where to hire such boats; all you have to do to get this list is to write to the State Publicity Bureau or the State Development Commission and it will be sent to you free.

The general and most common interpretation of a party boat is that it refers to one of the regular larger boats which can take from fifty to a hundred or more anglers to the offshore fishing grounds. Every angler should have at least one day's experience on a trip of this kind as he will meet a number of interesting characters and enjoy some very real excitement when the fish are coming up and over the side with due regularity. And when a really big fish is hooked and runs around several lines, there are some comments made which will never see the light of print. And when you think that, as we've mentioned formerly, you can have a full day's trip to sea, in some cases a free chowder for lunch made

from the fish taken but an hour or so before, lots of sun and fresh air plus fishing—all for one dollar in many instances—it would be impossible to convince us that there is anything in the theory that salt-water fishing is a rich man's game. It is rather every man's game just as much as fresh water.

Off California, the party boat fishing is even better organized than on the Atlantic Coast. Undoubtedly that all-year California sunshine has much to do with this fact. Be that as it may, along the fishing grounds of California just a short distance offshore are anchored great barges. Fast boats will take you out for a reasonable sum; tackle can be rented; bait is kept handily on deck in live-bait wells; and there's plenty of excitement. Yellowtail, mackerel (not as good eating as our Atlantic mackerel), halibut, giant jewfish up to several hundred pounds, sea bass, snappers, hacks, barracuda, croakers and other gamefish furnish food and fast fun. If you happen to hook into one of those big jewfish, they'll set you afloat in a separate small boat so that you can play the monster to his or your own defeat. When the barges are full of fishermen, there's many a tangle, many a fish lost, but it is all in the day's sport.

In the Gulf, there are still other types of party boats. One interesting type is where the party



boat takes you—and possibly twenty or thirty others—out to the shallow bars well offshore of the mainland. You are dropped overboard on the shallow where you fish alone—with a gunnysack tied to your waist as a creel—until the tide comes in up to your middle when the “mother ship” comes back to haul you aboard. This is a rod-fishing proposition—and a sporty one when the channel bass, snappers, weaks and other line-stretchers are running.

## BAIT AND FLY CASTING

Lest we erroneously brand the bridge and pier fishermen and others who fish from the shore as handliners all, we hasten to state that there is many a bay, inlet, or tidal river where the bait and fly caster can have as much sport with his pet type of tackle as can the man fishing from the most luxurious cruiser.

## THE PLUG CASTER

All along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts there are thousands of spots where small but hard fighting game-fish can be taken with plugs. Some of the very ones which you already have in your bass or pike fishing kit will do the trick. And there are lots of spoons which cast well and help

fill the creel to boot. However, the underwater lures are generally better than the surface lures for salt-water game-fish. For example, one of the most popular bait-casting lures of the south is the clothespin type which casts like a bullet and runs deep. The bait-casting rod should be no less than five feet (either bamboo or steel); preference seems to run to five and a half or even six foot rods. The line should be heavier than the regular fresh-water fisherman may use: 6 and 9 thread cuttyhunk will not cast so well as the silk lines as it does not have the same smooth finish, but it will hold those bigger fish more frequently.

And speaking of the bigger fish, it is only fair to warn our salt-water bait-casters that once in awhile, in their casting from the shore—be it pier, bridge, jetty, rocks or the bank—they are bound by the law of averages to tie into some big fish that is going to strain that fresh-water tackle to the limit. Therefore, if you are going in for bait casting in a very serious way, it would be a good idea to invest in a little heavier outfit. There are some fine rods now available with two-handed casting butts, reel seats which will accommodate the faster, lighter salt-water reels holding a couple of hundred yards of 6 thread cuttyhunk, and with tip weighing no more than five ounces. The tips should be about six feet in

length and stiff enough to handle ounce or ounce and a half lures, but still whippy enough to get real distance and to allow the thrill of feeling every flip of the fish.

More and more boat fishermen are learning that they can catch more fish if they will anchor once they have located a school—or perhaps the regular feeding grounds—of game-fish and then bait cast. The fish are less apt to be disturbed, especially in waters less than ten feet deep, and it is more fun any day to cast for a fish than to take him trolling. Try out any salt-water fish in this way and you will have more respect for him than when you drag him alongside of a moving boat on heavy tackle. We took some pollack on those light salt-water bait-casting rods—actual tip weight: five ounces—last mentioned above, and we thought for a moment that we were in a school of small tuna. You will not catch as many fish in a given number of hours, but you will have a heck of a lot more fun.

## FLY CASTING

The fly fisherman also has his spot in the salt-water picture. There is hardly a fish that swims in the briny deep but what at one time or another will take a fly. We are talking about inshore fish—not the bill fishes and tuna. Strip-

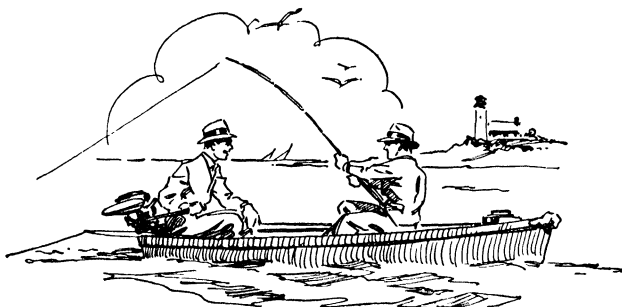
ers, blues, weaks, snook, small tarpon, and even herring will give you a fighting demonstration that will open up new avenues of sport for the man who likes the long whippy rod, the single-action reel and the oiled or enameled fly line.

For the average run of salt-water fish that can be taken along our thousands of miles of eastern, southern and western shoreline, we recommend the nine-foot, five and a half to six ounce fly rod. Let the angler choose between those powerful new hollow-core steel fly rods or the also reliable bamboo—the choice is purely a matter of personal taste as both have proved themselves worthy.

Naturally the fly line will balance with the rod and for the weights mentioned above, an HDH tapered or a level D will do the trick. Get the thirty-yard coils and be sure to put on plenty of 6 thread cuttyhunk backing. Also if your fly reel is one of the smaller ones, you'd better get another one of the size usually designated in reel catalogs as made for salmon fishing. Fifty yards of backing will handle most fish that you might seek along the shore with the fly rod—and we'll wager that every once in awhile you'll be mighty glad to have all that backing, and maybe wish you had more.

Streamers and bucktails are the best bets for all-round salt-water fly fishing, yet we've seen

herring go crazy mad over a very small wet fly or nymph on about a No. 14 hook. Then, of course, there are a number of new flies tied up within recent years especially for salt-water game-fish and which imitate such natural food as herring, sand-eels, sea-worms, sardines, shrimps, and yes, Mr. Ripley, even squids. Some of these flies are mighty effective and we've seen them produce when fresh bait would not.



## Chapter 5

### TROLLING

**T**ROLLING for salt-water game-fish is one of the most popular and sure-fire methods for every species which will take a moving bait. Therefore, trolling covers a big field and is applicable to most all the well-known salt-water gamesters. Most all the surf fishes—stripers, blues, weaks and mackerel—as well as the pelagic or open-ocean wanderers such as tuna, pollock, amberjack and marlin will take one form or another of trolled bait. Therefore, the troller may head his boat to the offshore banks, along the very edge of the inshore bars, or well inland on tidal rivers and inlets, depending upon the habits and haunts of his intended victims. While the big deep-sea game-fish are usually taken

trolling or drifting, they are deserving and will have a separate chapter in this book. Thus in this section, we will deal only with the comparative light-weights—and believe us, there are champions among them.

## WHAT FISH

To list what fish can be taken trolling would be to cite the entire list of game-fish in the Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Pacific. As we have already mentioned almost all salt-water denizens that have interest to the angler, in this chapter we will devote more time to methods and factual information on the taking of these fish. If there is doubt in the reader's mind about whether a certain fish can be taken trolling, you can quickly find out by referring to Chapter 2 where along with each fish is given the method by which they may be caught.

## TROLLING SPEEDS

Whether you are playing hide and seek behind the inshore rollers, holding your breath lest your boatman make a slip and get in the path of a breaker, or whether you are well offshore, a most important part of trolling is the speed of the boat. As in many other types of fishing, it is

impossible to state a definite speed at which your lure or bait should be drawn through the water. Some fish like a fast-moving lure up to seven miles per hour; others will take a very slow one, down to three miles per hour. Certain types of lures such as metal squids can be trolled faster than lighter lures, which would hop up on top of the water and lose all action. The speed of your boat then should depend on the lure you are using and the fish you are seeking. Stripers will take a spinner and sea-worm combination which is barely moving. Pollack will take a slow spinner and pork rind one day and another day will hit more savagely on a faster-moving metal drail. School tuna will hit a very fast-moving feather jig, as will bluefish. If there was one law which could be laid down for trolling speed, we would advise the angler to set the speed of the boat to get the most lifelike action out of the lure being used. Incidentally, we have seen days when mackerel would not take a small lead jig tipped with pork rind or white cloth at three miles an hour, but they would murder it when the boat was stepped up to five miles an hour. This leads us to the statement that it is a good idea to vary the speed of the boat until the most success is had. Remember that different speeds mean different levels of travel for the lures used—and that is important, as some days



fish feed deep and other days the same species feed on top.

If you are using an outboard motor which will not slow down, we advise the purchase of trolling plates, which are usually available from the same dealer who sold you your motor, and are detachable if you wish to use them only occasionally. If you do not have trolling plates, a ten-quart bucket tied to the stern of the boat will be a good makeshift; if one bucket doesn't cut your speed enough, try two of them.

## HOW FAR BEHIND

If a general rule could be set for the length of line behind the boat, we would suggest a longer line in shallow clear water (80 to 100 feet) and a shorter line (50 to 75 feet) in off-shore, deep or discolored water. This rule is merely a basis from which one has again to experiment with different fish. Reef fishing in Florida, we had wonderful luck with mullet-strip baits trolled about 60 feet behind the propeller; when we were fishing inside the Keys for tarpon we went back to 100 feet. But if we changed to spoons and feathers on the shallow tarpon grounds, we stepped up our speed and ran the lure way in close—25 to 30 feet behind, in fact right in the wake of the boat—and had

equally good luck. As is the case with many fish, including school tuna, the wash of the propeller seems to attract them, and we've seen the latter fish taken on a cedar jig trolled less than ten feet from the boat.

There are times, even in shallow water, when fish are feeding so hungrily that they seem to throw all caution to the wind and come to the very side of the boat. Only this past summer we had several occasions when striped bass averaging from five to twelve pounds would take our lure before we could get it more than the length of the rod behind the boat. Blues, as a rule, strike better on a longer line, but they also will become bold enough to hit in close.

As an average minimum on most inshore and offshore fish we would advise at least 50 to 60 feet.

## ROD POSITION

A common fault which many beginners make is the position in which they hold the rod while trolling. Both steel and bamboo rods are tough and surprisingly strong—but that is no excuse for abusing them.

The correct position in which to hold the rod is with the tip pointed back toward the stern of the boat. Under no circumstances hold the tip pointed ahead of the boat; if you do this, a sud-

den strike brings all the pressure on the very tip of the rod and is most apt to snap it off within a couple of feet of the tip guide. Good rods are built so that the strain of a fighting fish, if the rod is pointed toward him (tip up, of course), will be equally distributed from the tip to the butt of the tip. When the rod is held pointed away from the fish, all the pressure comes on the very tip end—and few tips will stand the gaff of this punishment.

Still again, if the rod is trolling even a light lure there is a certain amount of strain which may put a set in the rod during the day's fishing if it is held at right angles to the boat. But if the rod is pointed more toward the trolled lure, the line takes the constant drag and it is easier on the rod.

## FOLLOW UP

As a rule there is more than one line overboard when trolling. Under these circumstances, here is a tip which will help fill up the fish box more rapidly. Let's suppose that you tie into a mackerel. Your rod tip comes up so that the bamboo or steel can stand its share of the pull—and you start to reel your fish in or give him line as the case may be. When you get him coming toward you, have your fishing partner reel his line in—or let it out—so that his lure comes

fairly close alongside the hooked fish. In many cases, he will have a strike immediately, as there is something about a hooked fish which draws others of his kind along to see what ails him.

In doing this, care will have to be taken not to tangle the lines, but the idea is worth the chance as we have seen it work time and time again on amberjack, mackerel, stripers, pollack. In short, the hooked fish acts as a decoy, and wise fishermen take advantage of this fact.

If there are three or four lines out, a school can be kept around the boat for quite a long time if a hooked fish is left in the water—not too close to the boat—until one of the other anglers gets his line back in the same vicinity, and hooks another fish. This will not always work, but it is worth a try.

## TAKE A LOOK

Many anglers think that when they are trolling all they have to do is let out the line twenty or thirty yards behind the boat and then wait for the fish to strike. But there's much more to it than this. One thing which should be done at regular intervals is to inspect your lure or bait, to see if you have picked up any seaweed or grass which will absolutely kill your chances of taking a fish until the encumbrance is removed.

And if your favorite lure does not take fish—try another. You like lobster and steak—but you don't care to have it at every meal.

## HANDLING THE BOAT

The man who handles the boat while you are trolling can make or break the success of the trip. As a rule when you charter a boat you get a reliable skipper who knows his business, so that you may not have to worry about this important factor at all. But there are times when you may be handling the boat yourself or you may have a friend at the tiller or wheel, when the following notes will be found valuable.

Primary rule of boat handling is not to run through a school of surfacing fish. You may get away with this once in a while, but generally you will put the school down into deeper water and lose them. However, if you will circle around the school, steering the boat so that the lines will troll through the edge of the fish as you make a turn, you can take fish after fish—if they are in the mood, of course—without scaring the school. A long line will cut into the school much more easily than a short line.

By all means stop the boat—or at least slow it down—when you strike and hook a fish. If you are using light tackle this will be essential;

if you are not, you lose all the fun there is by playing the fish from a fast-moving boat. Give the fish a fair chance to merely fight the angler and his tackle; don't throw in the boat as another adversary to your quarry. Give 'em a break. There will be times when the water is too rough to stop the boat; headway will be needed to help steady the ship. In this case, take a wide circle around the fish or run slowly along parallel with him.

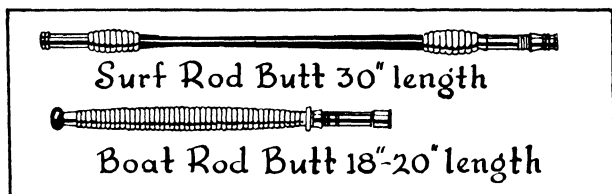
Never let a fish run ahead of the boat. This is up to the steersman if you are into a good-sized fish, but with any care at all he should be able to keep the fish either astern or off to one side. When a fish runs ahead of the boat you are up against it for taking up slack; and you have the further handicap—often disastrous—of the possibility of the line fouling on the bottom of the boat or around the propeller. When the fish is ready to come in, take him in over the stern or near it so that you'll be ready if he takes an extra lease on life and makes a last short run.

## TACKLE

Inasmuch as there is a definite outline of specific tackle for each species of fish in another section of this book, we will not repeat all this

information, but merely point out additional data which apply particularly to trolling.

First in importance is the rod, which may be steel or split bamboo with a five to six foot tip and a butt which may vary from eighteen to twenty-four inches. We prefer the longer tip,



which means more rod action and better control of a fish as he is brought up to the boat. You will remember that the average surf butt is thirty inches—this greater length being designed to allow more room between the hands and thus better leverage for casting. Since you do not, as a rule, need to cast when trolling, the shorter butt is more practical as it brings the reel in closer to the body and allows better handling when fighting a fish. The surf rod can be used for trolling, but it is a poor makeshift.

For the most sport we again urge you to use the lightest tackle. A six-ounce tip will handle most all the lighter fish that one encounters when trolling. If you are just beginning, the nine and

twelve ounce tips may feel safer to you but you will miss a great deal of sport by going too heavy.

The reel and line are, of course, chosen to balance with the rod. The standard balances are listed at the end of this chapter, but we wish to remind you here to use light lines with light tips, as you can overload a light tip merely by using too large a line. As we are not including the big gamesters in this chapter, your line requirements will vary from 6 thread to 18 thread with 21 thread being the very heaviest needed and this only when fishing around rocky ledges or reefs where a fish may foul the line and break or chafe off a weaker line. Incidentally, a spare spool of line is a good precaution.

The reel will be from 2/0 to 5/0 and equipped with a star drag, a leather thumb-drag and a free spool. It pays to buy the best one you can afford as all salt-water fishing does give a reel plenty of hand work. Of course, the smaller reel goes on the light rod, etc. Some reels now come with two spools so that you can have an extra line ready to use.

## LEADERS AND SWIVELS

In trolling, the line is never attached directly to the lure. A wire or gut leader is used, with a



swivel on the line end, for two very good reasons: first, to help deceive the fish into thinking that the lure is not attached to anything; second, and this applies particularly to wire, to lend strength against the sharp teeth of certain fish which would sever a line and also to prevent the line from coming in contact with a fighting fish; if this happened the line might chafe off on rough scales, back fins or tail.

For bluefish, always use a wire leader—and the same goes for barracuda or other fish with sharp teeth. For school tuna, a tinned wire leader of about six-foot length is recommended. We prefer the tinned wire to the braided or twisted cable leaders as the single strand seems to take more fish, possibly because it is not as visible. For the smaller fish, a three-foot leader will do, but we prefer long leaders—at least six feet. Always use leaders which are longer than the fish you are seeking. Also go as fine as possible.

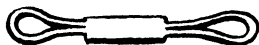
The common brass barrel swivels are standard with most all fishermen for the lighter fishing with which we are dealing in this chapter. In addition to



SNAP SWIVEL



SWIVEL

CONNECTING  
LINK

one of these on the line end (between line and leader) we have also found that where we are using a variety of lures, it is good practice to have a snap swivel at the lure end of the leader. In the first place, if you are using a spinner, the two swivels are double protection against unlaying your line through failure of the swivel to "swiv". Secondly, it is much faster and easier to undo the safety-pin catch of a snap swivel to slip off an old, and slip on a new, lure than it is to snip the leader and re-tie it each time.

Swivels are not expensive and it is a good idea to have plenty of extra ones in the kit. If you are trolling fairly fast, keep an eye on your line to see that it is not becoming untwisted. Swivels have a habit of not working under pressure.

## NO KNOTS

It is a fact that every time you tie a knot in a linen line you reduce the strength of the line considerably. At first glance, it would seem that you have to tie a knot in order to fasten the line to the leader swivel—but there are knots and knots. If you are using a leather thong, put the thong through the eye of the swivel; then run the line through the two eyes at each end of the thong; then run the line down through the eye of the swivel and back again through the holes in

each end of the thong; then a series of half hitches will hold things together securely even though you have not tied a knot in your line.

Other knots which will hold and which should be used when not using a leather thong connector are the water knot and the anchor knot. Still again, some merely take a series of half hitches and then seize the loose end. Take your choice of these several knots—they are all good.

### LONG LEADERS HELP

The average fisherman has as many theories as the average dog has fleas. Proving or disproving them is not always an easy task, but now and then favorable conditions will enable us to test out these theories and give a definite “Yes” or “No” on them.

The dry-fly trout fisherman who is a student of his game is thoroughly satisfied with the fact that a nine-foot leader will take more fish when the streams are low and clear than a three-foot or six-foot leader. A good many salt-water fishermen, particularly those trolling for striped bass and weakfish in the bays, harbors, inlets and tidal creeks, have held to the theory that a long gut leader will also take more stripers than a short leader or no leader at all.

This past season, two of us had an excellent

chance to test out the long-leader theory. We were fishing from the same boat, using the same rods, reels, same size of line, the same spinners and bait, and even trolling with the same length of line. Naturally, the testing of such ideas depends upon the co-operation of the fish—and this day we certainly had that co-operation.

Our two lures were trolling side by side, barely three feet apart, behind the rowboat propelled by an outboard motor. In fact, we held our rods as closely together as we dared without having the lines cross and tangle.

In the first half hour's fishing, the writer took five striped bass. My companion took none. When my score went to seven, with my partner still staying at zero, we asked if we could have a look at his end tackle. As he granted the request, we noted that he had tied his line directly to the spinner whereas I was using an eight-foot artificial gut leader of twenty-pound test.

For experiment's sake, I removed my leader and put it on his line—and he started to take fish at once. When he had taken seven fish—while I, leaderless, took absolutely none—I inserted another eight-foot leader on my own tackle, with the result that both of us caught fish, neck and neck, during the remainder of that tide while the fish were really feeding ravenously.

Therefore we are sincere believers in long

leaders, especially if you are trolling for salt-water game-fish in shallow or very clear water. We suggest, as a minimum, a three-foot leader and preferably six or eight feet of gut. As stated elsewhere in this book, don't, by any means, use artificial gut leaders when trolling for bluefish or other gamesters which have sharp teeth, as they will go through a gut leader like a hot knife through butter. Artificial gut is cheap, but it certainly does help to take those inlet and tidal salt-water game-fish.

### TROLLING SINKERS OR FINS

The greatest bane of the salt-water troller is the constant danger that his swivels will cease to revolve; that consequently the cuttyhunk line will become untwisted or unlaidd, which means not only a line which will kink into a mass of knots as soon as the pressure is relieved from it, but also a line which has lost practically all its strength or value. Nor does it take very long to ruin such a line when using a revolving bait or artificial after the swivels stop "swivving."

This danger can be very readily and economically avoided by using the simple keel sinkers which can usually be obtained in weights varying from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to one ounce. These are simply pinched or folded over the line just ahead of the

swivel which connects the line and leader. If you use the heart-shaped ones, put them on the line so that the tapered end is toward the rod tip, thus allowing the keel to slide easily through grass or weeds without fouling.

Another very simple and equally inexpensive item which serves the same purpose—and just as well—is the trolling fin.

Either of these simple but effective gadgets can be obtained from your local dealer or most any tackle manufacturer.

## TRY DIFFERENT LEVELS

In trolling for various species of salt-water game-fish, it is an excellent idea to try different depths. Bluefish, weakfish, tuna, pollack, striped bass—in fact, most any species you might wish to name—undoubtedly do feed at different levels, a condition which may be governed by the colder temperature, tidal currents, and probably even more frequently by the position of the fish upon which they feed.

A typical instance which can be applied to practically every form of trolling is one which a friend of ours called to our attention several seasons ago.

This particular angler is an avid striped-bass fisherman, who spends most of his time in the

bays, inlets and tidal rivers using nine-foot, six-ounce fly rod for the line-sides. His end tackle consists merely of a single hook or a three-hook gang (this gang is rigged with the single hooks one behind the other on a ten-inch strip of artificial gut or flexible and light cable wire) ahead of which he places a nine-foot gut leader—here is another proof of the long-leader theory.

Our friend trolls for twenty minutes going quite slowly without any sinker at all. If, at the end of this time, he doesn't have a strike, he pinches on a small sinker to the line just ahead of the leader—and fishes for another twenty minutes. He repeats the dose of one sinker every twenty minutes until he hits fish.

Each sinker, of course, changes the level at which the lure is trolled. This idea is practical for most any type of trolling. In fact, if there is more than one rod fishing from a boat, and the level at which the fish are feeding is not known at the start of the trip, it is a good plan to rig each line differently either with different size lures or with the same lures and different weight sinkers on them. Naturally, the rest of the party will change, and undoubtedly very rapidly, to that particular rig which reaches the proper level to take fish.

## NOTE TO CASTERS

Trolling in the inlets, and bays, with fly rod is becoming increasingly popular in New England and other coastal sections of the country as it has been found that some surprisingly heavy salt-water fish can be handled on this very light tackle. We believe that in the coming years many a man will find out there is more fun in salt-water fly fishing than he and thousands of others have ever imagined. The fish are there and when it is really discovered by the average fly man, we'll wager that there'll be as many salt-water fly fishermen as there are fresh-water addicts.

And a long-handled boat net is mighty handy when you are using such light tackle and cannot "horse" the fish out of the water to lift them to the bank or over the boat side.

Many men prefer casting to trolling—and we are inclined to agree with them that it is more sport. Our compromise on this is to troll until we find the fish and then cut the motor and cast with a salt-water bait-casting rod, or if the quarry is not too big, with a fly rod. Depending on the tide or wind and how fast the school of fish are moving, you can let your boat drift or you can anchor if the fish are in a certain hole. Naturally, if the fish are on the move, you can throw the



motor into operation every now and then to catch up with them.

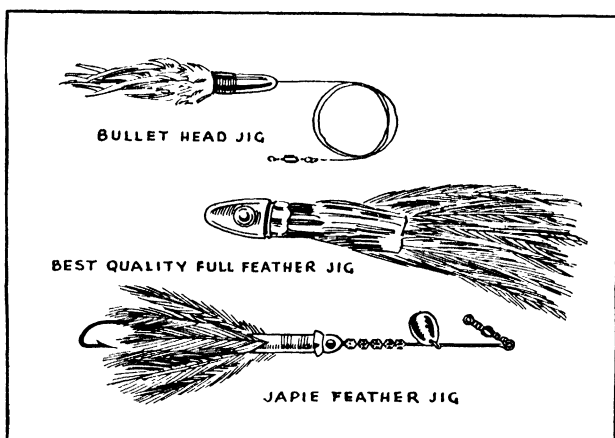
We have already covered the fact that fly and bait casting will take many of the salt-water gamesters but this phase of the game is worth mentioning again to vary your trolling. Be sure to have plenty of backing on that fly reel or bait-casting reel if you are hitting into fish that run to good size. Incidentally, this is a good way to break in a confirmed fresh-water fisherman to the salt-water game; he does not have to invest in special tackle to find out for himself that the briny deep holds plenty of excitement for him.

## ARTIFICIALS AND BAITS

To list all the artificial lures which will take fish while trolling would be to issue a sizable tackle catalog. First rule to remember is that salt-water fish, as a rule, prefer smooth running spinners and spoons—those which revolve rather than wobble. Yet there are wobblers like the Record, Drone, and Wilson spoons and the Pearl wobblers which are great game-fish getters.

Most popular probably is the feather jig which can now be bought in most all colors of the rainbow, the pure white being as reliable as any. These can be bought ready-rigged but it is better to rig your own by merely slipping the wire

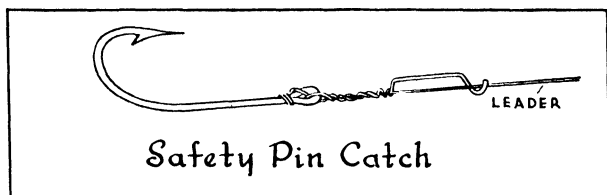
leader through the hole in the nose and then bending on the hook; pull the hook back toward the metal head so that the hook is hidden inside the feathers. If your fish are striking short, take several extra twists around the leader just ahead



of the eye of the hook so that the hook will lie further back toward the tail end of the feathers. By the way, these feather jigs baited with two or three sea-worms are a great trolling lure for striped bass. The feathers are not used so much around the Florida reefs, as fish with sharp teeth will rip them to pieces in a hurry. Best bait here is a strip of mullet, rigged so that it will not spin but will run smoothly through the water. See il-

illustration for best way to rig for this cut or strip bait when trolling.

What to use for strip bait depends upon where you are fishing. Mullet are ideal if they are obtainable in your locality. If not, take a strip of any fish whose flesh and skin will be tough enough to hold together. Barracuda and bonito belly are both good, and a strip of tuna belly,



cut on the bias, is excellent. In rigging your strip baits be sure that they lie flat from the safety pin catch above the eye of the hook to where the bend of the hook is pierced through them; if there is a hump in between these two points the bait is apt to twist and spin instead of running flat as it should. As a rule, if you charter a boat, your captain will know how to do this anyway, but we are of the school which likes to rig its own baits—it's half the fun of fishing.

Something which we take on all trolling trips is a bottle of pork rind. Short pieces on the end of metal squids undoubtedly increase the effec-

tiveness of these lures. We've run out of sea-worms and have taken stripers on two strips of pork rind hooked on the top and middle hooks of a three-hook gang. And pork rind and spinners are an almost infallible combination for pollack. You can get the tail-hook rinds and if fish are striking short they are best. Some of the tackle companies now put up large strips of dried pork rind which are about six inches long, tapered on the ends, and about an inch wide in the middle; these whiten after they have been in the water for a few minutes and act as a swell substitute for strip bait. In fact, if there is a champion all-round substitute in the field of lures, it is the pork rind.

Many of the big muskie plugs will take salt-water game-fish, and most companies now put them out with non-rusting hooks especially for the angler—in addition they have special salt-water finishes. More than this, there are an increasing number of smaller wooden and metal plugs which have proved to be reliable salt-water artificials. These are heavy enough so that with proper rod and reel, they can be cast or trolled, thus making them double-threat, dual-purpose lures.

The basis of most artificials is that they represent a natural bait fish. True enough some of them do not seem to duplicate any fish that was

ever seen, and possibly these take fish because they arouse the curiosity or the anger of the victim. Working on the original basis, there have recently appeared an increased number of salt-water flies which have definitely proved their worth. This summer we tried out several different ones and took fish on them all. One was a wonderful maribou (red) imitation of a blood-worm and behind a spinner it did good work. Another was an imitation sand-eel, and with its quill head, polar hair and feathers came mighty close to looking like the real article—it fooled the fish anyway.

Others represented herring or sardines, mackerel, and sperling. They varied in length from three to six inches and could be cast on a fly rod. We also did some profitable experimenting by pinching on some sinkers ahead of a two-foot gut leader and casting these with our bait-casting rod. And, of course, they can be trolled too. The artificial lure for salt-water fish is still in its early developments but is gaining ground rapidly. Don't be afraid to try something new. There is more to be learned about salt-water game-fishing than is now known—plenty of room for that pioneering spirit.

Remember that your leader should be as fine wire as will hold the fish you are seeking. If your quarry does not have teeth, you also have

a choice of gut leaders. And speaking of gut, be sure, if you are using the artificial gut, that your knots are extremely tight, as this artificial stuff does get "sleezy" or slippery and loose knots will pull out.

## STRIPERS

Trolling for striped bass is a subject about which one could well write a complete book. Therefore, we are going to boil our statements down to very brief facts. Trolling for this popular fish can be divided roughly into two sections: (1.) bay, inlet and river; and (2.) outside or surf. The latter business is no pastime for men who are not experienced: it means driving your boat close in to the shore, often where there are hidden rocks, most always where the surf is an ever-constant threat to your safety. Here you will need stronger tackle than for the smaller stripers which frequent the bay and river inlets. For these larger fish, which may run from fifteen to fifty pounds, you will need a regulation boat rod with a medium-weight tip, short butt; your reel will have to hold at least two hundred yards of 12 or 15 thread (the latter if you are fishing in the vicinity of rocks) or you will not hold those big fellows. Your lures may be feather jigs, from plain white or yellow to a combination of colors, and all these feather lures will catch more strip-

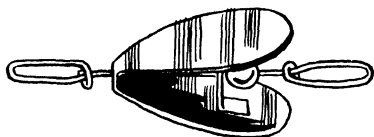
ers if you add a couple of sea-worms to the half-hidden hook. Your speed will be from three to six miles an hour. When you hit a fish, work him offshore if you can—and if the weather permits, stop the boat so that the fish will have a chance to fight it out on fair-square terms. Other lures are metal jigs tipped with pork rind, spinners and sea-worms, and spinners and big special streamer flies.

One of the most popular forms of fishing in New England is trolling in the inside waters—bays, harbor shores, rivers and marshy creeks—for the line-sided fighters. Here your tackle can vary widely depending upon the size of the run of fish, which usually average anywhere from two or three pounds up to ten and fifteen.

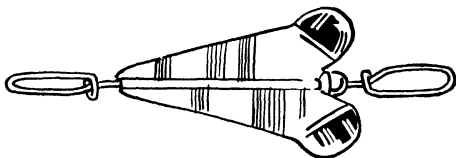
### SPINNER AND SEA-WORMS

While there are a score of lures which you can use successfully, there is one which is undoubtedly outstanding under all conditions: the smooth-running spinner and sea-worms. If we had to boil our choice down to one lure for all times, spring, summer and fall, this combination would be it. The spinner shapes will vary from the Northern or Fishkill type to Montauk or June-bug, Robbins Reef and Rangeley to Hauthaway: all are good and apparently more effective

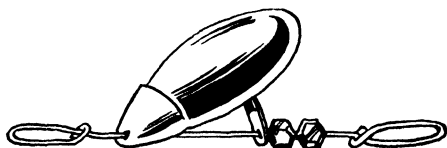
than the wobbling type of spinner. Always carry at least one spinner in a hammered brass or copper finish—and those having red beads are often



**"MONTAUK" SPINNER**



**"ROBINS REEF" SPINNER**



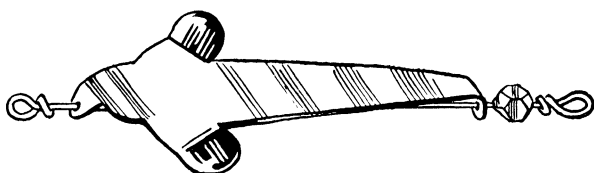
**JUNE BUG**

very effective. Use at least a three-foot leader of artificial gut or very light tinned wire which will test no less than fifteen or even twenty pounds—we prefer the gut particularly in shallow clear water. There should be a swivel at the line end

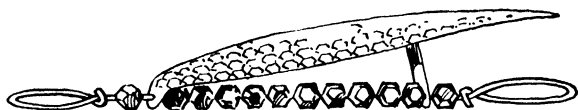


of the leader and another small swivel with a snap on the lower end of the leader so that the spinners can be quickly changed if desired.

Behind the spinner, attach the very effective



HAUTHAWAY



NORTHERN SPINNER WITH BEADS



NORTHERN SPINNER WITHOUT BEADS

gang of three single hooks which may be rigged on gut or light cable wire. This gang usually has a smaller hook at the top or spinner end. Then there is a space of about six inches before the next hook; the third hook is only about two inches behind this and forms the very end of the rig. Using large sea-worms, hook one through the head, about a sixteenth of an inch behind the

pinchers. Do not by any means insert any of the other hooks in the sea-worm but merely let him trail past the pair of end hooks. In this way he will have plenty of action and will just reach past the very end hook. When a small striper hits, he will usually get only the one tail hook; a slightly larger fish will have two hooks in his mouth while a big fellow will occasionally gulp all three of the barbs. Be that as it may, you will



lose very few short strikes on this effective combination. The same lure will also take weakfish with equal regularity. Troll fairly slowly. Where the water is shallow you will do better to row than to use a motor. Stripers will sometimes be found up in the shallows where there is barely enough water to cover their backs.

This same smooth-running spinner and triple-gang hook has accounted for scup, tautog, sea perch, pollack—and in one case we even caught a small codfish on it. It is a particularly fine lure for pollack when the first and second hooks are dressed with strips of pork rind.

## COLORED SPINNERS

A trout fisherman would not think of approaching his favorite stream without taking along a fly book which is overstuffed with flies representing every color known to fly manufacturers. Contrast with this the trusting striped-bass fisherman who goes gaily forth to his favorite trolling ground, be it bay, harbor or tidal inlet, armed only with his old reliable spinner. If he is a thorough fisherman he will undoubtedly have at least two different sizes of spinners to which he attached his three-hook and sea-worm gang. But in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will not have more than one color—and that will be silver. The odd fisherman, to complete the hundred, is the fellow who has found through experimentation that once in awhile a hammered copper spinner will take three fish to one against the smooth-running silver spinner.

Perhaps surf fishing is an older sport than trolling, which accounts for the fact that surf casters have found colored metal squids have their very definite place in the scheme of things that take more and better fish. It is not at all unusual to find yellow, blue, green, and black as well as silver squids.

We haven't tried it yet, but it is just so much plain logic that if the striped-bass troller would

take his old spinners after the shine has worn off, touch them up with some quick-drying enamel in various colors to simulate the green and silver of the sand-eel, the blue and silver of the herring, the red of the sea-worm, said fisherman might come home with a smile on his face and a better score on fish.

This thought comes from our good friend, Hugh Grey, who is a thorough fisherman and always trying something new—usually successfully. If various colors work, as they do, on metal jigs, salt-water flies and feather jigs, why not on spinners?

## FIND THE FISH

Probably all of us who have ever wet a line have occasionally had the thought that our single lure takes up a mighty small space in the ocean, that consequently we are lucky to catch anything. The ocean is a big place and the further we get off shore the more we realize how small a section of it we can cover even when trolling and on the move all day. Just as the fresh-water fisherman can waste a lot of time if he does not know where the weed beds and underwater bars are located and if he does not know the habits of his fish, so can the salt-water fisherman spend fruitless

hours unless he follows at least a few of the known means of locating fish.

If you are out of sight of land, there is one method which usually works and helps you locate schools of fish. Watch the gulls. If you see them ganging up and diving into the water you can pretty well rely on the fact that there are some small bait fish being driven to the top of the water by larger game-fish. Once in awhile the gulls will lie to you, but in the majority of cases they are truthful messengers. And remember when you find the school to keep the boat out of them. Work around them in circles so the trolled lines will come through the edge of the fish.

Quite often you can locate schools of fish by seeing them break. Therefore, it does pay to keep a sharp eye out at all times. Feeding fish do not always break water, but to the sharp-eyed fisherman the swirl of a single fish will often prevent your passing by some good fishing. If you have a mast with a crow's-nest atop, this is the best place from which to watch for fish, as a man that far above the water can see down into the depths and spot fish when they would not be visible from the cockpit or deck. On this point of seeing into the water we recommend polaroid glasses which cut out glare and enable the human eye to see much deeper. This in itself adds to the

fun, as often the polaroid lenses will help you see a fish coming for a closely trolled lure when you could not have spotted him with the naked eye. If you have weak eyes and are subject to headaches you should wear good sun-glasses anyway.

A spot which is in great favor among the trolling fraternity is along the very edge of a bar. Steer the boat so that you are right on the edge of where the shallow water tapers off into the depths. On a clear day you may be able to see bottom and thus govern your course. On a gray, cloudy day, however, there will be a difference in the color of the water on the shallow bar and the deeper water; the former will be light colored, the latter dark. The edge of this dark water is a logical place to find most salt-water game-fish; they lie in the deeper water and watch for schools of bait fish, crabs, and other natural food as these morsels work along the edge of the shallows. We've seen many a fisherman troll for hours up in the shallow water before he found that the fish were in the edge of the deep water at the drop-off. We do not mean by this that the fish will not work up onto the shallows at high tides as they will; but in the majority of cases you'll take more fish in the edge of that black water.

Some fishermen like to troll across tide—and

we know that this does work for bluefish. Still others lay their claims that the best fishing is to be had trolling with the tide; still again there are those who prefer to troll against the tide. Fish can be taken by all three methods. If one way does not work in your particular territory, try the other methods.

### STICK TO IT

There is one good rule in fishing and we've had it happen so many times while trolling—probably because you cover much more territory this way than surf casting or bridge or pier fishing—that we mention it in this chapter. That is the rule of sticking to it. We recall one day in particular when we had trolled for about eight hours without a strike. There were four of us in the party and two had put their rods away and were chatting with the skipper. The other two still had their lines out but felt that it was futile. All of a sudden both rods jerked down, the reels screamed—and things began to happen in a big way. The two fish were boated—they were twenty-five-pound pollack—and as we brought them up to the gaff we saw other fish following them. Before lifting them out of the water, we made sure the other two rods were putting their feather jigs overside—and they were immediately fast.

It was a calm day and the surface of the water was oily smooth. Just after these four fish had been hooked and landed, pandemonium broke loose; the entire surface of the water for an area of an acre around the stern of the boat was churned to foam as a big school of pollack slashed around on top of the water. For the next hour we caught fish as fast as we could handle them. If all the lines had given up early that trip, we would have come home fishless instead of having one of the fastest and most furious fishing experiences of our lives. So it does pay to keep at it. Don't troll the same lure all day; try different lures and baits, try different speeds; try anything you can think of. If the fish are around, you'll eventually find a method that scores.

## HOOKING, PLAYING, AND BOATING

The troller does not as a rule have to worry much about hooking his fish. All game-fish hit harder at a moving lure as a rule than at a still bait—they have to chase it and catch it on the fly. If you are leaving your rod in a holder instead of hanging on to it personally, set the star drag just hard enough so that even though the fish takes line when he strikes, he will still have the barb driven into his mouth. As a rule, all the fisherman has to do is to jam his thumb down



momentarily on the leather thumb-drag and then release it to let the fish—if he is a heavy one—run. The drag on the reel should be set just tightly enough so that the line will not overrun and cause a backlash. If you screw the brake up tight, you will pull the hook out of his mouth or cause it to tear the mouth so much that it will fall out at the first headshake or slack line. Remember also that as the fish takes line off the reel, the spool becomes smaller, which increases the degree of drag even though the brake is not touched by you.

One of the greatest mistakes which a beginner makes is to freeze up on the reel and refuse to give the fish line when the hook is set. Let 'em run. On the other hand, if you are trolling in shallow water around rocks or over coral reefs and your fish is a deep fighter, you will have to put the pressure on him to keep him from winding you around a rock or diving into a hole in the coral. But if you are offshore, don't be afraid to give line—just so long as you keep it tight—as the more line a fish has to drag around after him, the more quickly he will tire himself out.

After your fish is hooked keep that rod tip up!! Remember that the bend in the rod takes up the shock of sudden plunges; that the spring in the rod tip, in addition to being an absorber, is also able to reflex and help take up the slack

as the fish turns toward you. Never point your rod directly at a fish; make the rod do its full share of the work.

Slack line is, of course, a fatality, and if you are fishing with even one companion, he'll undoubtedly shout, "Don't give 'im any slack line," just as soon as you hit a fish. We dislike back-seat drivers—but the advice is still good.

Another common mistake made not only by beginners but by people who have fished enough to know better, is to try to rush a fish. It is human nature to attempt to get the fish safely into the boat as soon as possible. But you'll lose more fish by rushing them than you will by taking your time in playing and wearing them out. Nothing is so apt to mean a lost fish as to have one which is not tired out in the least alongside of the boat; a sudden lunge may foul the line, snap the line or rod, or tear out the hook. You may troll for a long time before you hook a fish; why not take plenty of time and have the real fun of playing him as long as he'll put up a fight?

While you should keep your rod tip up, it is permissible, in fact essential, to lower the tip after you have pulled the rod back up and past the perpendicular; however, as you lower the tip, you should reel fast to take up the slack line thus gained. This is known as "pumping" a fish

—and is the accepted method of regaining line. But be sure to reel fast as you lower the tip.

A rule which is known to all experienced salt-water fishermen and which is included in all club regulations is that no one is to touch the rod, reel or line except the man playing the fish. This is not apt to happen when fishing for the smaller fish with which this chapter deals, but we mention it anyway to offset the chance of an angler's being disqualified in any competition or contest by innocently allowing someone else to help him land a fish. It is permissible for the captain or anyone else to help, once the leader can be reached.

When a fish is at the side of the boat and ready to be taken in, don't ever lift by the line. If the fish is a sizable one and is not to be returned, a gaff can be used; if the hook is solidly imbedded—and a quick glance will tell—the fish can be swung over into the cockpit of the boat by the leader. But if the hook is about ready to tear out, you should lift the fish in by a gaff or by inserting the fingers under the gill covers. Always keep the fish in the water—not half out so that he can shake his head against a solid pull—until you are ready to take him into the boat.

## NEW FISHING GROUNDS

We have already mentioned that salt-water sport-fishing is a comparatively new sport, that there is much room for experimentation in the matter of lures and the methods of fishing. No one knows all the fishing grounds which surround the North American continent; there is plenty of room for pioneering. For example, the great Nova Scotia tuna grounds such as Wedgeport were discovered only a few years ago; Ipswich Bay, Massachusetts's now famous tuna water, really was not appreciated until 1939; Virginia only recently realized that she had some wonderful white marlin fishing off her shores. There are undoubtedly thousands of places all up and down the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific Coasts which have never been fished and may be even better than the known territories. Try new places. It is always more fun to catch fish in untried waters. Anglers who dislike to "follow the crowd" have something delightful ahead of them in this respect alone.

## SCHOOL TUNA

One of the most exciting forms of trolling is the offshore fishing for school tuna. We refer to the smaller of the bluefin species, those which

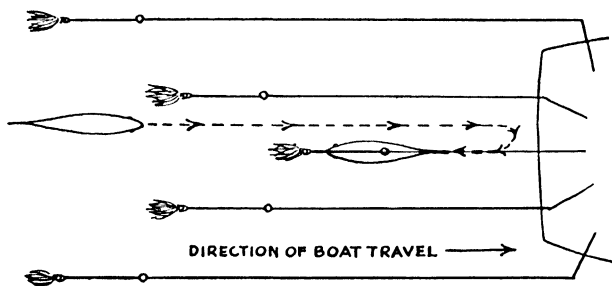
run from ten to fifty pounds with an occasional specimen going up near the hundred-pound mark.

We hasten to add that this is not out of reach of the average man, as charter boats are available at prices which enable four or five anglers to hire one for the day and split the cost so that the bill per man is not much more than five or six dollars. If you have never tried this form of fishing, get your gang together and give it a whirl. The best season is July and August. Thousands of new converts have been added in recent years to the ranks of tuna fishermen and that in itself is favorable testimony to the sport which you can have offshore.

The tuna being a pelagic fish is found anywhere from five to fifty miles offshore and these smaller fish run in schools so that it is not uncommon to have all lines fast at once. Let's take a typical trip offshore so you can see for yourself what happens.

Unless you are lucky enough to have your own boat, you'll step aboard a rugged seaworthy craft from forty feet up and with plenty of beam. Incidentally, a boat which has more beam is likely to be a better tuna boat, as these fish seem to be attracted by the white water which is kicked up behind the craft. The trip offshore to the fishing ground is likely to be uneventful. Once there,

you get out your tackle. The rod will have a tip which may weigh from nine to fourteen ounces and measure from five to six feet in length. There is a new nine-ounce, hollow-steel rod which looks like a perfect one for these school fish. The reel will hold at least three hundred yards of 21 or 24 thread line. You can take them on 18 thread and should use this lighter line with a light tip. The butt of the rod, incidentally, is the usual short boat one measuring from twenty-one to twenty-four inches. If it is your first trip, we advise the heavier outfit as tuna hit like a ton of bricks and can snap a line as quickly as any fish we know.



The lures used are usually feather jigs although some captains prefer cut bait or metal or wooden squids with a piece of pork rind or fresh squid attached. Another effective lure is merely a piece of lampwick with a bullet-like metal head

and a hook attached. Oddly enough, you troll very close to the boat as they will come right up into the wake. A good arrangement of lures is to have the four or five lines so that the two outside ones may be thirty feet behind the boat; the next two inside lures should ride about twenty feet behind the boat; and, if there is a fifth line, this should be in the middle about fifteen feet back. We've seen tuna come up and hit a lure which was not five feet from the stern. This V of lures is an effective method.

Tuna are fast swimmers so the trolling speed is about six or seven miles an hour. With all five lures out, we are moving along through the clearest of clear water. The look-out, watching for schools, is up atop the mast. Suddenly he sings out, "Watch out behind. Here they come." At once one rod goes down and the reel whirs. Then the second rod—and at the same instant perhaps the third, fourth and fifth lures will be taken. Pandemonium breaks loose. Five fish on at once means crossed lines and possibly lost fish if we get too excited—but who wouldn't be excited when hooked to these blue and silver bullets. The captain may slow down the boat, stop it altogether or take a slow swing in a circle—all depending on how the fish act.

Your line crosses mine and if your line is further back I step under your line and move

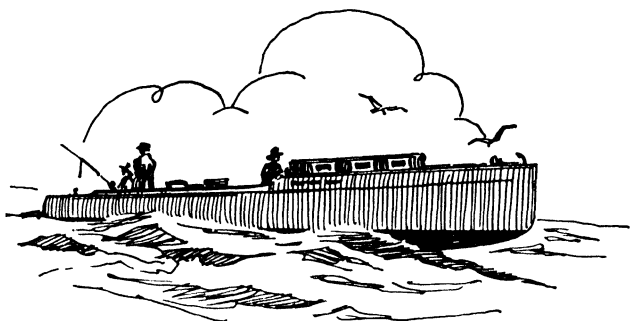
across in front of you so that we will not tangle. There'll be plenty of fast foot and head work here if we land all those tuna. As a rule, all five fish will not be boated, but it can happen—and then it's time for a can of beer all 'round.

When school tuna hit they will come from behind, swim ahead of the lure and then turn to strike as they are going in the opposite direction from that which the lure is traveling. There is no need to set the hook; they hook themselves and move off with the hook so fast that they have gone thirty or forty feet or more before you can clamp down gently but firmly and with increasing pressure—never hard at once or you'll snap the line. The brake on your reel should have been set so that there is just enough tension to set the hook. Then as you play your fish, you can tighten the star drag gradually. Tuna fight deep and hard and you'll know you've been exercising by the time you get the fish up ready for the gaff.

You do not always see tuna before they hit, but there will be days offshore when you may see school after school of these speedsters thrashing the surface to foam as they feed. It is a great sight and one you'll long remember.

Don't think tuna fishing is for the favored few. It's a sport *you* can afford.





## Chapter 6

### ROYALTY OF THE SEA

SOME people live to make enough money so that they can retire at the comfortable age of forty or so, to travel around the world, buy an expensive motor car or yacht without worrying about bills and taxes. Others, and these are the ones who interest us most, live to have enough money and sufficient vacation from the daily grind to fish for marlin, tarpon, sailfish, swordfish or tuna. These noble species, the royalty of the sea, are to the salt-water angler what salmon are to the fresh-water fisherman; they are something to look forward to, something to dream about and plan for. Probably there's not a man among us who really like salt-water fishing, who does not aspire to go to Florida or the Gulf for

tarpon or "sails," Nova Scotia for those giant blue torpedoes called bluefin tuna, or to Cape Breton or Catalina for swords and marlin, or even to Bimini for blue marlin. Not that we are discontent with our local lot, but if the blood courses through your veins as it should, and you don't want these things, you'd better consult a physician.

We are not going to bore you with a long dissertation on the wallop and thrills which these big warriors of the deeper offshore waters give you when they hit your bait. We will, however, attempt to express what you can expect from—and how to fish for—these giant tackle twisters. Even if our pocketbooks do not allow us to indulge in this type of fishing regularly, perhaps occasionally we can fish for, and even catch, these members of Neptune's royal family.

For full-sized thrills there is no phase of fishing which will compare with setting the hook into a fish weighing upwards of a hundred pounds. Remember that you are using a few pounds of tackle in an attempt to vanquish an opponent which may weigh one hundred pounds for each pound of tackle. The world's record tuna at this writing is some 890 pounds—and that's a lot of fish. Most all of us get a real thrill when a four-pound trout rises to our fly; so imagine the pounding of blood in your veins when a several-

hundred-pound fish swirls—and we mean swirls—as he takes your bait. It is practically indescribable!

## DISTRIBUTION

While there are only a few species of really monster game-fish, their numbers and distribution make up for this fact. If you are near the seacoast in any spot in America you are near big-game fishing. The big tuna are fished for mostly in Nova Scotia, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Bimini and California waters. Swordfish are taken along most all the entire Atlantic seaboard, with their heaviest concentration being from the offshore banks of Nova Scotia to Montauk, New York. On the Pacific Coast, the broadbill is found off Catalina, Avalon and Cape San Lucas. White marlin are found from as far north as Nantucket Island (Massachusetts) south to Bimini, with many being discovered in recent years off Virginia and Maryland. Striped marlin are pretty much a tropical water fish being taken on the Great Bahama Banks, the Channel Islands of California, and the Pacific waters of Mexico. Atlantic sailfish are taken in the edge of the Gulf Stream from Key West up along the coast of Florida to Fort Pierce, with the Keys, Miami and Palm Beach being favorite fishing grounds. Texas waters are also

coming into the limelight with their sailfishing. Pacific sailfish are found from Cape San Lucas south. Averaging about a hundred pounds each, they run heavier than the Atlantic branch of the family. Tarpon are another warm-water fish and are found in the shallow waters and channels of the Keys and along the Gulf of Mexico to Louisiana, Texas and the mouth of the Panama Canal. From this brief sketch it can be seen that these great gamesters are widely distributed; that some of them are not too far from you.

## RODS

For the real heavyweights such as tuna over one hundred pounds, swordfish, and marlin you do need heavy tackle. Bamboo rod tips range from sixteen to thirty ounces with a length of five to five and a half feet; hickory rods are heavier and may run anywhere from twenty-five to fifty-five ounces. We favor the sixteen-ounce rod as a better break for both fish and fisherman alike. Tommy Gifford, one of the most famous big-game fishing guides in the world, has proved time and again that sixteen-ounce tips and 24 thread line will handle really big fish. But if you are a beginner, you might do well to start off with the heavier outfits.

On sailfish, tarpon and white marlin, whose

weights will rarely go much over a hundred pounds, the experienced man will use either a 3/6, 6/9 outfit, or a 9/15—and he'll have twice the fun that he would enjoy with heavy tackle. In fact, many a sailfish and tarpon have been taken on heavy fly rods. It is true that fish will not run as far when played on light tackle as they will when you slug them with a heavy outfit. And by the way, there is a new hollow-core steel rod which weighs about nine ounces which would be plenty heavy enough for sails, tarpon, school tuna and white marlin.

## REELS

Reels for big-game fishing can represent real money. In fact, if you are looking for expensive ones you can find them cataloged up to around \$550. Lest you turn away in alarm, let us hastily add that there are some mighty fine pieces of mechanism for big-game fishing which can be bought for \$37.50 and up. We are speaking now of reel sizes which run from 12/0 to 15/0. The 12/0 size will hold from five hundred to eight hundred yards of 39 thread line, which is a good-sized line for the beginner—the reel capacity in this size and others depends on the manufacturer. And if you are going after the real heavy lads you'll choose nothing smaller

than a 10/0. The size of the reel again, as in all phases of fishing, should be in balance with the rod used. For the sailfish and tarpon, you can use 21 thread line on a 6/0 reel, which equipment would be heavy enough and to spare.

Your reel for the heavy fish must be of the very best of materials. It is inconceivable to the man who has not tried big-game fishing, but it is true, nevertheless, that a big tuna can rip off line so fast on the strike that the reel will overheat and freeze solid. We've had reels get so hot that they were mighty uncomfortable to the touch.

All big-game reels are equipped with a star drag. When you are trolling or stillfishing, be sure that the brake is not set too tight. It should have just enough drag so that the hook will be imbedded when the fish strikes. Don't be afraid to let your fish run; the more line he takes with him the more pressure that line exerts on him as he drags it through the water. After the fish is hooked and is running is time enough to start tightening up the brake. Even then, do not screw the brake right down as hard as it will go; if you do, the chances are ten to one that you'll rip the hook right out of his mouth and lose him. One of the leading tuna guides has told us that more fish are lost from braking them too hard than from any other mistake which an angler may

make. Naturally if you are short of line at any stage of the fight, it is only reason to tighten down as hard as you dare—but this should be done only in emergencies.

The brake on most big-game reels is very easy to operate, turning toward the rod tip to tighten up and back toward the angler to loosen. Be sure that you are acquainted with the degree of pressure which a movement of the star drag effects as we've had reels which would tighten down hard on just a quarter turn. It takes only a moment to find this out—if you are using hired or strange tackle—before you get into a fish.

## LINES

The only type of line used in big-game fishing is the reliable cuttyhunk, which is made from linen. On the heavy fish, your line size will vary from 24 thread up to 72, although 54 is generally considered plenty heavy enough. As we have said before, 39 is a good all-round size. Of course, if you are using a light tip for tarpon or any other of the big fish, you will choose your line accordingly, so that it will balance. In our description of reels, we have mentioned their line capacities, and of course whatever reel you are using will govern the amount of line. The reel

should be filled but not so loaded that the line will scrape on the cross bars.

Always let out about one hundred yards of line to wet it down before you begin fishing. If you do this behind a moving boat, you'll be surprised to find how hard it is to reel it back in. Better stop the boat. Wet line is stronger than dry line; and it is not so apt to cut down into the spool and jam under pressure.

It is also common practice to double the fifteen feet of line next to the leader. After the hitch—never tie a knot, remember—is made to the eye of the leader swivel, be sure that the line is seized to insure against the hitch slipping. We learned our lesson on this one the hard way when we had a four or five hundred pound tuna on and were safely past the first three long runs when the line went slack; we were not forcing the fish in any way, the brake was set gently. What happened? When we reeled in we found that the line was intact, which left only one answer: the end had not been seized with another short piece of line to prevent its slipping out. It's an unpleasant way to learn such a simple precaution.

## LURES AND BAITS

There are a number of artificials on the market for big fish and they vary from spoons to



feathers to wooden and rubber imitations of natural food. There are special tarpon flies, rubber eels and even rubbery flying fish. However, while these are good lures (some of them should be in the big-game man's kit), the usual bait is fresh and depends entirely upon the locality where one is fishing. In Nova Scotia, herring is a favorite bait for tuna; the Ipswich boys this year found that a stillfished whiting was good medicine; others favor a trolled mackerel or fresh squid. Off Catalina and the West Coast in general, flying fish are great bait.

In fact, the geographical location determines the bait, as the best fresh bait that can be offered to any big game-fish is what he is feeding on at the moment. A sewed mackerel or squid is tops for swords. Strip baits are most popular for sailfish and should be rigged as shown in the drawing on p. 173. One way of hooking a flying fish for Pacific marlin is to insert the hook under the chin and bring the point out through the top of the head in a line with the eye. Others use a double-hook rig with one hook through the mouth, and the tail hook slipped through the skin just a couple of inches ahead (on the under side) of the base of the tail.

There will be times when you will want to hide the entire hook and this can be done by slitting the belly of the fish used, insert the hook, run

the leader or chain out through the mouth; then sew up (with needle and thread) the mouth and the belly. Off Wedgeport, N. S., the common practice for giant tuna is merely to stick the hook through the middle of a herring and let it go at that. Probably the captain of your boat will do the rigging of baits, but we are putting these notes down as a guide to those who wish to do their own rigging and experimenting.

Hooks used will vary from 7/0 to 14/0 with the 12/0 being a favorite for tuna, swords and marlin. Types most commonly used are Sobey, Martu, Evans, and Zane Grey. While the Evans is a comparatively new design it has proved itself in the last few years for both strength and penetration; it does have a more direct pull than the conventional hook shapes.

## TEASERS

Teasers are hookless decoys to attract fish. If a fish rises behind them they are hauled in rapidly and the lure with a hook in it is substituted. The teaser may be like a big wooden bass plug or it may be a real fish. These are trolled usually on a shorter line than the angler is using for his real lure. The best teaser rig we've seen is the "grape-vine" which the boys at Wedgeport use. They rig up two heavy lines,

each carrying about ten herring spaced two feet apart and tow these from each side of the stern. We got a real surprise one day when a bluefin came right up and began eating the herring off "the vine," before we could get the teaser out of the water.

### CHUMMING

In addition to lures and teasers, there is another way to attract those big tuna. This is by chumming.

When you go out to Bald Island and Soldiers' Rip off Wedgeport for bluefin tuna, you do not take just enough herring to bait your hook. As a matter of fact you take at least three barrels of those blue and silver bait fish. That sounds like a lot—but you're after big game.

Once on the grounds your skipper heads his boat into the fast tidal current and sets the speed of his boat to just offset the pull of the tide. Your motor may be half open but your boat remains stationary. It's an odd feeling to watch the water rush by, to feel the throb of the motor—and yet to hold the same position.

The first operation is for one man to bait your hook. Another helper produces a sharp knife and chops up the herring into two or three inch chunks; when he has a little pile of this chum, he pushes it overboard. In the clear water you

can see it float back past the stern and sink gradually.

The man who baited your hook has pulled off fifty to sixty feet of line and has coiled it neatly on the after deck. He has your hook, baited with a whole herring, in his hand. When the bunch of chum goes overboard, he drops your hook with it. You sit tense and expectant—until the line tightens and the herring bait comes to the surface. Then the line is retrieved by your helper and coiled carefully again. This operation is repeated until—and it does happen suddenly—there is a terrific swirl where your bait had been, and you are fast to that streamlined blue torpedo of the deep, a big bluefin. Now, the fun really begins.

What has happened is that the constant stream of cut herring has attracted a tuna—sometimes several at once—into the chum stream. The tuna follow this uptide, and naturally when they see a whole herring they are more apt to pass up the small pieces for a bigger and better morsel—which has your hook in it. This method has proved very successful.

At Ipswich Bay, Mass., there is no tidal current to take the chum stream back to an unsuspecting tuna. However, the sport fishermen found a very good substitute; they still-fished behind the commercial dragger fishermen

who unconsciously chummed for the rod and reelers by throwing overboard waste fish. The tuna scented a free and easy meal, but instead picked up many an innocent looking dead fish which carried the sting of a steel hook. In short, the draggers were a great asset to the rod and reelers, as this normal operation created a most effective chum which the sport fishermen used to good advantage.

## LEADERS AND SWIVELS

If any item of big-game tackle has been a proverbial fly in the ointment, it is the swivel. Many a good day—and line—has been ruined when these connectors failed to operate. The safest procedure is to use baits which do not revolve. Those types of swivels preferred by big-game anglers vary to include such names as Sildur, Apex, Toggle, Siwash, and Heavy Duty.

Leaders are absolutely essential, of course, for this heavy type of fishing. The general length is fifteen feet and this meets with most all club tournament requirements. The strength of stainless single-strand wire or of your cable leaders will vary according to the size fish you are seeking. For the very heavy swordfish and tuna you can get the twisted cable leaders testing up to nearly five hundred pounds. If you prefer the

single strand wire—and many do—you can get it from No. 6, which tests 58 pounds, up to No. 12, which tests 195 pounds. As 54 thread line tests only 162 pounds when wet, we cannot see much sense in using wire larger than No. 12.

The leader should always be longer than the fish which you are seeking. A tuna or marlin can cut a line with his tail or chafe it through quickly if any part of his body is able to touch the linen. We would set ten feet as a minimum length, with fifteen feet being better.

Be careful not to get kinks in your leaders as nothing will break a leader so quickly. Also watch for rust spots, which mean deterioration of strength.

## TROLLING SPEED

As most all big game-fish are trolled for at one time or another, we again face the problem of trolling speed. If you are using artificials your speed may vary from four to ten miles per hour depending upon the lure which you are using: set the speed of your boat at the point where the best action is obtained by the lure you are using at the time. Probably four to seven miles an hour is average speed for these big fish when trolling whole or cut bait.

The distance behind the boat for broadbill will

vary also from fifty yards up. We've seen big tuna hit a bait right behind the boat so close that we could have touched the fish with a gaff; other times they will prefer a long line. Marlin will hit the lure from fifty to seventy-five feet behind the boat at times, but on other occasions will be so scary that an outrigger or kite will be the only way to get the bait to them without scaring them into sounding and disappearing. Tarpon will strike a trolled feather or spoon right in the white wake of the boat, but seem to prefer a cut bait at a greater distance, seventy-five to one hundred feet. Depending upon their location and depth of water, tarpon sometimes can be approached quite closely, as can be witnessed by their being taken on heavy bait-casting or fly rods.

## HANDLING OF BOAT

The manipulation of the boat in big-game fishing is just as important as the part played by the man behind the reel. An experienced captain at the tiller can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

When your line is whistling off the reel, you'll be glad to have a captain who knows enough to turn his boat and speed along parallel or at a tangent to the running fish to help you gain back

the needed yardage. A good captain does not let a fish get ahead of the boat or in a position where the fish may dive under the boat and foul the line underneath. Constant vigilance on the part of the captain is an asset which can be appreciated only when you have been strapped in the chair and have hooked into a fish which seems to want to run all over the ocean in a dozen different directions.

## OUTRIGGERS

If you see a boat with long steel or bamboo poles jutting out of her sides, the chances are that you are looking at a sport-fishing craft equipped with outriggers. There are three good reasons for using outriggers: first, to get the bait away from the path and wash of the boat; second, to get the back drop necessary to properly hook a swordfish, marlin or sailfish; and third, to allow a party boat to fish four lines (two from rods in the chairs, two more from the outriggers which reach out on each side), thus increasing the chances of taking fish and decreasing the chances of tangled lines. In fact, some of the Jersey boats fish five lines, as they add an extra outrigger which goes straight up and trolls a long line astern over the center.

The old-fashioned way to hold the lines in the



outriggers was to use a clothes-pin but an experienced deep-sea fisherman has now placed a very neat instrument on the market which is adjustable as to size of line, will not allow the line to slip except on a strike, and in addition to that sets off a percussion cap when the line is tripped by a strike. Even the sleepest fisherman will be awakened into alertness by the report which warns that a fish has hit. The idea is simple; the instrument fool-proof; and the only thing we wonder about is why someone hadn't thought of it before.

Outriggers themselves have seen much improvement in recent years and can now be had in stainless, non-rusting, non-corroding steel sections which work exactly like a telescope. When not in use, they can be telescoped together and folded back against the side of the cabin out of the way.

## STRIKING

Setting the hook into sailfish—and all bill-fishes for that matter—is a matter which requires a certain amount of knowledge. Inasmuch as it is the habit of this type of fish to kill their food first with a smash of their bill or sword, you can readily understand that to set back at the first tap would be to miss the fish every time. Experienced sailfishermen, just as soon as they feel the

tap on the bait, immediately drop back from twenty to forty feet of line with the reel in free spool. This allows the bait to act as though it had been stunned by the blow from the fish and gives the sail time to get the bait in his mouth. On marlin, however, the experts advise that the mere lowering of the rod from the perpendicular to the horizontal position gives enough time for this great gamester to get the bait in his mouth. Swordfish should also be allowed time to get the bait in their mouths before you set the hook.

When you do strike a big fish, it is a good idea to sting him hard; strike not just once but two or three times to make sure that you have driven the hook home. This is especially true of tarpon whose mouths are extremely hard and bony; these fish can be struck at once, as can tuna; both of them usually hit hard when they take the bait.

## PLAYING

We have already warned against setting the brake down hard so we will not include the manipulation of the reel drag in this paragraph, but rather the manipulation of the fish after he is hooked.

With rod tip up, the first thing to do is to keep constant pressure on the fish from start to finish. If you let up for a rest, remember that you are

giving the fish a breathing spell also. Yet you will find that on a very heavy fish—four hundred pounds or over—you will have need of headwork as well as brawn. Steady pressure gauged so that you can stand the strain is better than wearing yourself out in over-exertion which will tire you more quickly than it will the fish. Whenever you can pump line and gain it away from the fish, do not lose the opportunity.

There will be times when you would like to turn the rod over to a companion. But if you do not handle the fish all by yourself, you are automatically disqualifying your catch for any tournament, record, or prize contest. There are regulations in big-game angling which clearly define that: (1.) No one shall touch the rod except the man handling it; (2.) No one shall touch the line until the leader can be reached; (3.) No one shall help with the reel. If any of these things occur, the fish is not eligible for consideration as a legitimate catch by any club.

Do not let the fish get ahead of the boat. The best place to keep a fish until he is worn down and ready for the gaff is at some distance from the boat. If a fish sounds directly under you, you will find it is almost impossible to move him; however, if you run the boat off about eighty or one hundred yards, you can usually get the fish started for the surface again.

Tarpon, sailfish, broadbill and marlin are the most spectacular leapers of all game-fish. They will "walk on their tails," and go through other aerial acrobatics that seem incredible for fish of their size. Tuna seldom jump, but fight hard and deep.

## HARNESS

One accessory which is most important is the harness, which is similar to a vest with leather straps and snap clips that fasten into places provided on all big-game reels. This enables a man to really get his back and legs into the fighting of a fish. Without the harness it would be practically impossible for the average man to wear out a big fish. Do not get a cheap one with narrow straps; those straps will feel like razor blades after an hour of constant pressure.

## FIGHTING CHAIR

Outside of the rod, reel, line and lure, a regulation tuna fighting chair is one of the most essential fixin's if you are going after the big blue-fins that run from a hundred pounds up. Just imagine the beating your stomach would take from the butt of a rod which was bending and jumping to the pull of a couple hundred pounds

of lightning-like tuna, and you'll not need to stretch the imagination.

The proper chair is on a swivel arrangement, which allows the angler to face his fish no matter in which direction the tuna may go. The back of the chair should come out quickly so that the angler can really lean back when he is pumping his fish. The front of the seat has a socket for the rod which moves up and down at will. Some of the new chairs are mighty fancy looking equipment with red leather cushions, chromium metal trimmings, foot rest, etc. You do not need the fancy kind, but if you are going after those big fellows you do need a strong reliable fighting chair.

And it should be fixed firmly to the floor to stand all the pressure that a strong man can exert.

## GAFFING

No makeshift gaff is good enough to handle fish of two hundred pounds and over. The first thing to remember is that no fish should be gaffed until he is well played out. Even if you could get a lively fish aboard, the tattoo of his tail on the floor of the cockpit could wreck anything that happened to get hit. You are tangling with really big fish and they have no place in the boat unless they are pretty well fatigued. As a matter of fact,

you could get only a small percentage of untired fish into the boat, as they would tear the gaff out of the hands of even several strong men.

Here's an example. A few summers ago Paul Bauer, a good friend of ours, was hooked into a tuna which was undoubtedly a record fish. He hit the big bluefin at seven in the evening, was still fighting the fish at six A.M. the next morning. Three times the fish was brought to the side of the boat. Twice he tore away after the gaff had been sunk and took the gaffs—handles and all, away with him—and there were three strong men on the second gaff. Unfortunately after all this fracas on the third attempt to gaff the fish, the leader fouled under a bit of metal stripping on the side of the boat, the fish, estimated at nine hundred pounds, gave one lunge, parted the leader—and was gone. That was tough luck. But in fairness to the courage of the beaten angler, we wish to record that he was back on the ground again in less than a day later. This will give you some idea of the tremendous power which those big fish have.

Well-equipped boats have a roller across the stern so that heavy fish can be rolled up onto the afterdeck. Others have a hoist and block and tackle aboard. Still again, if you haven't room in the cockpit or on the deck for a really big one, the next best thing is to slip a rope noose around

the base of the tail and tow your catch into port.

There is considerable disagreement about where to gaff big game-fish. Some favor gaffing near the tail to get that powerful propeller out of water as soon as possible. Others favor gaffing near the head. No matter which school of thought you may favor, be sure that you have a real rugged gaff with sufficient handle to give you an opportunity of really leaning back on it.

## WHAT BOAT

To designate one special boat as ideal for big-game fishing is to stick out one's neck. However, there is one boat which comes as near to being "it" as any we've seen. We refer to the Bay Island tuna boats which are used off Nova Scotia. From thirty to forty feet long, trim, graceful, strong, fast, easily maneuvered and seaworthy as a cork, they fulfill all the necessary qualities for big-game fishing. Developed from many years of lobstering offshore in all kinds of weather, these boats with their low cabins, their big roomy cockpit, can spin around on the top of a wave and yet ride as dry as a bone in the roughest water imaginable. One great advantage which they have over stock cruisers is that their rudder and propellers are about one-third of the way forward

from the stern and thus they can be turned quickly.

Side stanchions are a nuisance and should not be anywhere near the stern where they might interfere with the playing of a fish. The same goes for an awning overhead; have it far enough forward so that when the rod is brought up to the perpendicular the overhead covering is out of the way. In recent years the boat builders have recognized the big-game fishing market and now many of the leading companies build special sport-fishing cruisers which come complete with outriggers, fishing chairs, fish box, bait wells, and rollers.

## RETURNING FISH

One of the best things which has happened in big-game fishing is the fact that a wide-awake Florida legislature has decreed that no commercial use can be made of either tarpon or sailfish. We believe that this action was started when a commercial dog-food company began to consider these fish, which are generally considered by man to be inedible, as a possible dog food. Nothing could have been more threatening to the welfare and abundance of these strictly game fish than such a use of them. Hats off to Florida for her prompt and effective action, which



should assure a future abundance of tarpon and sailfish for generations to come.

These two fish should be returned to the water unless you wish to have your trophy mounted or unless you have a record fish. They are not good eating and they are usually hooked in the mouth so that they can be released unharmed to do battle with other anglers or to help propagate their worthy race. Don't take them in to dock just to have your picture taken and leave them there to be dumped as shark food.

Tuna and marlin are seldom taken home by the sport fisherman, being as a rule turned over to the boat captain as an extra bonus. If you are fishing from your own boat, we recommend that you take your tuna or swordfish catch to a commercial dock, where you can usually obtain a good price per pound—and this can help considerably towards paying for the upkeep of the boat.

## INCREASED POPULARITY

Big-game fishing is no longer a sport only for rich men. Tackle prices have come down to within reach of the average man. More fishing boats are available, and charter prices are reasonable enough so that a party of four or five can charter a boat and split the cost without anyone going bankrupt. State publicity bureaus are be-

ginning to realize the asset which they have in their coastal fishing, and information is much more available than it was only three years ago.

One of the greatest developments in big-game fishing has taken place in Nova Scotia. Just overnight from Boston or New York by comfortable boat lies Wedgeport, a few miles from Yarmouth, where the average bluefin tuna is over four hundred pounds in weight. Here are about twenty well-equipped boats, complete with tackle to hire too—and all at very reasonable prices. Sport tuna fishing, thanks to the aggressiveness of the Nova Scotia Government, Bill Gray, and the Wedgeport Guides Association, has established a new and flourishing industry giving a better living to the natives and a new world-famous fishing spot for rod and reelers. Incidentally, that one-time 890-pound world's record tuna was taken by John Manning (1939) and came from the Wedgeport waters.

Still again, Massachusetts has awakened to the fact that her Truro and Ipswich Bay areas have some wonderful tuna fishing. Ben Crowinshield was among the pioneers who opened up these grounds, which bid fair to take a full share of the big-game fishing spotlight in years to come. These grounds also have the advantage of being only an hour's run—or at Truro, a five-minute run—from shore. Ipswich is barely an hour's

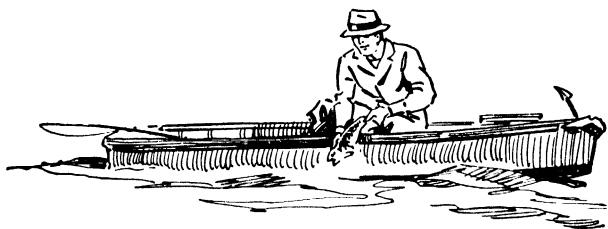
drive north of Boston. The big tuna have been coming into these areas for years but only recently has sport fishing been undertaken. Already the game is flourishing.

Maine, too, deserves full mention as, led by Henry Strater and his group, it too opened up new areas for big-game fishing which in years to come will probably make Maine as famous for her salt-water fishing as she is for her squaretail trout and land-locked salmon.

Block Island and Montauk grounds have been better known for a longer time but they too are benefiting from the increased interest in the off-shore pursuit of marlin, swords and tuna. Of course, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia have all jumped ahead with their offshore fishing and deserve full praise for their active part in helping to develop one of the greatest of all sports. In fact, Florida, even though she may have a greater variety of game-fish and a more clement all-year climate will soon have to look to her honors as the mecca of salt-water sport fishermen of the Atlantic seaboard.

It's a great game, this deep-sea battling with half-ton fish. Not until you have felt the shock of a hard-hitting tuna, heard the scream of the reel, and watched the line dwindle on the reel spool like ice in the sun, not until you have seen the gaff sunk safely home and felt the floor-boards

of the cockpit shake to the tail-tattoo of the boated fish can you fully appreciate the he-man thrill of big-game fishing. It is all that has been claimed for it—and more.



## Chapter 7

### CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION is such a broad term that we wish to define its application in this chapter as meaning: Conducting our commercial and sport fishing so that all salt-water game-fish will be preserved, and preferably increased, for many generations of fishermen to come.

The time is past when we can sit back and nonchalantly say, "There's more fish in the sea than ever were caught." The early settlers of this country would never have thought that the day would come when the millions of passenger pigeons would be extinct. The New England Puritans of the old days were able to step out their back doors and get a turkey for Thanksgiving or a good mess of heath hens—but the former have been driven from New England by civilization and lack of foresight; the latter for the same

two reasons are extinct. To drive along the industrialized Connecticut River Valley today—and after a glance at the pollution and chemicals which are pouring in from many factories—few people would believe that not so very long ago this river supported a million-dollar (annual) salmon industry. In the West, there are several thousand families of once commercial fishermen once on WPA simply because there were no restrictions on certain kinds of Great Lakes food and game fishes whose numbers have been so depleted that they will no longer support these fisheries. One could go on like this for pages to point out the ruthless ravages and waste with which America has treated her natural resources. But it does not make good reading if you are at all sensitive.

The sea *is* large. It *does* have countless millions of fish, both food and game species. It has stood up surprisingly well under the tremendous annual toll which improved methods and faster ships and refrigeration have taken of its resources both commercially and from the sports angle as well. Authorities show no great alarm over the ability of certain food species to stand the increasing inroads of the modern efficient fisheries; *but about some game species they are not so sure.*

Take the striped bass for example. Probably no one man is better informed about this important game-fish than Dr. Daniel Merriman, who has devoted quite a few busy years of intensive study to this one species. His report of 1937 points out that "it appears that probably a few of the female striped bass become mature at the end of their third year, while the majority attain maturity at the end of their fourth year. This agrees well with the results obtained by Scofield (1931) for the striped bass of the Pacific coast." This means that striped bass do not spawn until they have reached a length of from eighteen to twenty inches. Therefore, when seiners—or sportsmen—take bass smaller than that, they are catching fish which have not had a chance to do their part in reproducing to assure a supply for the future. This leads us to believe that to assure the future of the sport of striper fishing on the Atlantic Coast, there should be either Federal or State laws which will protect the entire migratory range of this fish until they have reached at least the eighteen-inch length. Probably the best way to express our thoughts on this subject of salt-water game-fish conservation is to print here the letter which, as Chairman of the Massachusetts Fish and Game Association's Salt Water Committee, we wrote to the Recess Marine Fisheries

Commission on November 1, 1938. The letter follows, and we believe that similar facts—in even greater detail—should be presented to the legislature and conservation departments of each and every Atlantic Coast State which has not taken sufficient steps to protect its game-fish from further depletion.

Recess Marine Fisheries Commission of Massachusetts  
State House,  
Boston, Massachusetts

GENTLEMEN:

After considerable thought and investigation, the Salt Water Committee of the Massachusetts Fish and Game Association wish to bring this report to you to substantiate our belief that proper restrictions should be placed on the taking of striped bass, blue-fish, white perch, and tuna, in view of the fact that these fish represent an asset to the State from the standpoint of a recreational attraction, which means business to coastal towns, sporting-goods stores and sporting-goods manufacturers in Massachusetts, as well as to commercial fishermen.

That the recreational asset of these fish to the State amounts to several hundred thousand dollars annually can easily be ascertained by obtaining figures from captains and owners of charter sport-fishing boats, innkeepers, hotels, sporting-goods stores, bait dealers, rooming houses, to mention only a few businesses which benefit from the money spent by residents within the State, as well as by many visitors from other States in search of salt-water sport-fishing.

Just for example, the past several week-ends at Chatham have seen all available rooms for rent, hotels and inns filled to capacity so that many rod and reel fishermen who gathered at this town to enjoy the fall



southward migration of the striped bass even had to sleep in their cars. Still again, a report has reached us from Chatham that in this town alone there are thirty commercial fishermen, and only two are equipped for seining bass while twenty-eight have been handlining with drails. Twenty-eight men have made a good living (some days as high as \$25 or \$30) at handlining, plus extra revenue by taking rod and reel fishermen along with them. It would seem from this example that a prohibition of seining for stripers would benefit a greater number of commercial fishermen. Whereas seining would greatly deplete the supply of fish and undoubtedly impair our future supply, handlining will mean a smaller annual take, leaving a better opportunity for an increase of this important salt-water species.

Still again, heavy seining is apt to flood the market, bring down the price so that a tremendous haul of fish would be needed to show any kind of a profit to the comparatively few seiners in this State; whereas the smaller catch would help maintain a better price level, which would be to the advantage of a greater number of commercial fishermen using handlines.

Another example of the importance of our salt-water game-fish is found in a survey made by The Associated Fishing Tackle Manufacturers which shows that salt-water fishing-tackle sales in this State have increased twenty times what they were about four years ago.

Further proof that our salt-water rod and reel fishing is an attraction which means added revenue to this State is found in the results of a single advertisement which the Massachusetts Development and Recreational Committee ran this fall. Even though this advertising appeared after our salt-water fishing season was more than half over, there have been nearly 1,000 inquiries received with a large number of out-of-staters coming to our coast for salt-water fishing.

When we look at the hundreds of thousands of dollars which sport fishermen spend in such states as Florida and California, who, incidentally, have established laws to protect their salt-water game-species, and when we consider the fact that our Massachusetts coastline is so constructed as to make a natural habitat for game species, it would seem logical that legislation could be enacted which would protect this natural State asset.

In our sincere desire to suggest salt-water game-fish legislation which will be fair to commercial men and sportsmen alike, we have looked into the laws which have been enacted in such States as: New Jersey, New York, California, Connecticut, South Carolina, Louisiana and Florida. Our feelings in this matter have been that all of these States have taken into consideration the interests of both sportsmen and commercial fishermen, that their restrictions upon salt-water game-fish have been placed only after careful consideration.

We have also studied reports of Dan Merriman, who has been employed by the State of Connecticut and also by the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries to study striped bass. Mr. Merriman's scientific research shows that striped bass do not spawn until they have reached an approximate length of eighteen to twenty inches; also that only about once every fifty years—this statement based upon a careful study of the history of striped bass—do we enjoy a large run of these fish such as we have had recently; also that since the striped bass are migratory, they should be protected in as many coastal States as possible to absolutely assure a future supply.

Another fish which has come into prominence during the last few years as a tremendous recreational asset is the bluefin tuna, whose annual migration brings thousands of these fish along our shores each season. This past summer a new seining ship, which,

we understand, was sent to Massachusetts by Pacific Coast tuna interests, and a local tuna seining boat took, according to reliable report, a total of about three hundred tons of these fish. Should other such seining ships be added in 1939, and, consequently, should the extension of commercial operations for tuna take place, there is every reason to believe that this species could be dangerously depleted just as it has been in the coastal waters of California.

We understand that most of the three hundred tons of tuna taken by these two ships were seined outside of the three-mile limit so that legislation preventing the seining of tuna within the three-mile limit should work no hardship upon the commercial tuna men, and would allow a goodly number of these fish to pass through our waters under protection, as records show that thousands of these fish also work along close to our shores in both their northward and southward migrations. (Author's note: *This three-mile limit would not apply to many Atlantic Coast sections.*)

Our study of salt-water game-fish restrictions in other States shows the following: that Louisiana considers striped bass, bluefish, weakfish, and white perch as game-fish and thus prohibits the sale of these fish within the State; that New York and Connecticut laws prohibit the taking or selling of striped bass less than twelve inches in length; South Carolina considers her striped bass a game-fish and therefore subject to game-fish laws; the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Game tells us that it is considering introducing an act to prohibit the trap fishermen from bringing their leaders nearer than three hundred feet from shore (this would allow a great many bass to escape traps on the inshore side); Rhode Island also contemplates an act to prohibit the taking of striped bass less than twenty inches in length; New Jersey now has a closed season on striped bass between March 1st and May 31st; they have also established a minimum

length limit of eighteen inches, which applies to the taking, possessing and selling of stripers. The Clause on striped-bass sales applies no matter whether these fish were taken inside or outside of the State waters. New Jersey also has a fee of \$10 for seining licenses—seines not to exceed seventy fathoms in length and with mesh not less than three-inches stretched while being hauled.

In the State of California, the purchase or sale of striped bass commercially has been unlawful for the past five years. It is also against the laws of the State to ship striped bass into or out of the State. The happy consequence has been that California offers the best striped fishing in the world.

In addition to other protective legislation, Florida has wisely ruled that no commercial use whatsoever can be made of tarpon or sailfish. Hats off to Florida. But when will other states awaken?

It, therefore, seems logical to the members of this Committee that proper restrictions should be placed on the above mentioned game-fishes: namely, striped bass, bluefish, tuna, and white perch. After careful consideration, we would like to suggest to the Recess Marine Fisheries Commission that they take steps to have the following legislation enacted:

*Section 1.* No person shall, except as hereinafter provided, take with a seine any bluefish, striped bass, or white perch within the three-mile limit, or in any tidal creeks, rivers or ponds of this Commonwealth. It shall not be a violation of this act for any person using a seine in fishing for mackerel or other fish for the catching of which its use is permitted to take therewith bluefish, striped bass and white perch in the aggregate to a number not exceeding ten percent in weight of each haul of a seine or to a number in excess of such ten percent if such excess is immediately returned alive to the water whence it was taken.

No person, either sport or commercial, shall take,

possess, or sell striped bass less than eighteen inches in length overall.

That trap fishermen shall not bring their leaders nearer than three hundred feet from shore, this distance being measured at mean low water.

That no seining of tuna shall take place within the three-mile limit.

That special licenses available at a very reasonable fee shall be necessary for the commercial seining of striped bass, bluefish, white perch, or tuna.

That those found guilty of violating the above laws shall lose their special commercial game-fish seining license mentioned above for a period of not less than one year; also the seine used in violation of the above laws cannot be licensed within one year; and violations shall also be punishable by a fine not less than fifty dollars and not more than three hundred dollars.

That the coastal wardens and the local shell-fish wardens and their deputies, if any, within their special jurisdiction shall enforce the provisions of this act.

*Section 2.* This act shall take place upon its passage.

This report and request is respectfully submitted by the writer as Chairman of the Salt Water Committee for the Massachusetts Fish and Game Association.\*

Sincerely yours,

MASSACHUSETTS FISH AND  
GAME ASSOCIATION.

*O. H. P. Rodman,*

Chairman, SALT WATER COMMITTEE.

P. S. If there is any further information on this subject which you desire, please feel free to call upon the writer.

\* *Author's note:* The Recess Commission reported favorably on legislation to protect salt-water game-fish in Massachusetts coastal waters, but the 1939 Massachusetts legislature adjourned without taking any action. Not until 1941 did Massachusetts pass a temporary bill protecting stripers from seining (plus a 16" minimum length limit).

Since the above letter was written Maine has legislated that striped bass can be taken only on hook and line, and has set a daily bag limit of six stripers.

The above epistle and the regulations would not apply in detail to every Atlantic and Gulf State but even so the principle and underlying need for protective legislation do hold true. Now is the time, while we still have at least somewhat adequate supplies of our salt-water game species, to start legislative action. Every single rod and reel man who approaches the salt water should take an active interest in seeing that his home State does something about this situation. Legislators act when voters bring pressure; and the vote of a salt-water fisherman when multiplied by the several million men and women who enjoy this phase of fishing has the power to get results. But you can't sit around and expect "the other fellow" to do the work. You have your part to do as well.

This chapter has no desire to crack down on the commercial fisherman. Let's get that straight. We merely believe—and firmly—that certain fish are more important to the welfare of this country as sport fish than as a commercial product, a marketable commodity. Let's protect these fish and there will still be plenty of fish for the commercial man to make his daily wage and for

the housewife to buy her Friday meal from the local market at a low price. There is a happy medium in this situation, and if sport and commercial fishermen will work together they will both benefit.

There is much more to conservation than mere legislation. Every single man and woman of us who enjoys salt-water fishing can, of course, if he has a vote, express his sentiments—and the actual facts as well—on proper and protective legislation. But there is another and immediate way in which all of us can do our part toward conservation of salt-water game-fish species; that is, simply to turn back, alive and unharmed, fish which we do not need. Florida has already made the average sailfish and tarpon angler conscious of the fact that it is good sportsmanship to release these fish, to let them live to reproduce more of their worthy tribe, to possibly fight it out fair and square again with some other angler.

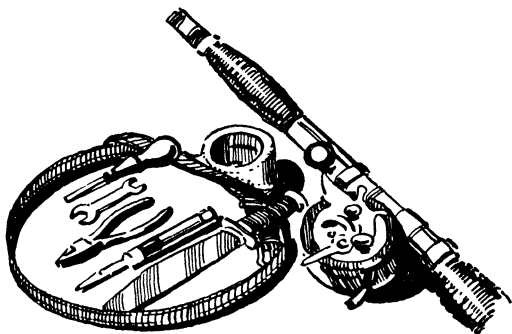
And this is as it should be with the excess catch of more edible gamesters, be they striped bass, mackerel, blues or any other. The fresh-water fisherman has learned not only to respect daily bag limits but to take pride in keeping less than the law allows. It is the principle of the thing. Why take more fish, whether from your favorite stream or your favorite stretch of surf beach, than you can use? Too much waste has already

taken place in our natural resources. It is high time to call a halt. Why wait until a depleted supply forces us to face daily bag limits? Why not conserve our supply now, to put off, and to even prevent, the need of such legislation?

We do not expect anyone to turn back all his fish. Some of them are much too good on the table. We enjoy a baked blue, striped-bass steaks, and broiled mackerel as well as the next fellow—and we like to come home with a mess of fish. But we do hate like the very devil to hear someone boast—as we have heard not so long ago—that they caught two hundred of this or that kind of fish. This two hundred figure happens to be an actual one. We asked the catcher what he did with those fish. He said he peddled them around the neighborhood and gave away about a hundred. The other hundred he had to bury in the back yard. That is nothing to boast about—the man who does it should be ashamed of himself, but there are those who are still so uninformed that they have their picture taken with such catches.

Catch all the fish you want. No one wants to cut down on your sport. But remember that the sport is in the catching, not the killing—and release every single fish you cannot use or do not want. That is one form of conservation in which every one of us can profitably engage.





## Chapter 8

### SHORT CASTS

Authentic bits of information on care of tackle, hints, tips and kinks that will help you catch more salt-water game-fish.

### SIZE OF ARTIFICIALS

**T**HERE are a goodly number of observing anglers who have come to the conclusion that the size of your artificial lure is just as important as its color and action. This theory—and we endorse it—is that if your artificial simulates the approximate size of the natural bait on which your quarry is feeding, your chances of success are greatly increased as compared with your catch on lures which may be much larger or much smaller than what that particular fish wants at that particular time. Naturally if the right-

size lure also has the color of the natural bait, that is to be desired.

## MARKER FOR SCHOOLING FISH

A great many times when you are trolling for blues, tuna, pollack or any other pelagic game-fish, you may be well out of sight of land, buoys or other fixed objects by which you can judge the approximate position of the boat when you hit into a school of fish which are not showing on the surface. Our friend, Bob Coulson, has a stunt which he uses for fresh-water fishing; it is equally effective for the salt-water man.

Take a gallon can which is watertight, or a small keg, or any other round object which will float. Take a long piece of tarred line—enough to reach bottom in the offshore waters which you may be fishing—and secure one end of it to the round and floating object. Wrap the remaining length around the float, and to the opposite end of the line tie a pound sinker or even a small sounding lead. The float should be painted white so that it will show up well even in rough water.

Keep this rather strange object conveniently at hand while you are trolling offshore. When you get a strike, drop it overboard at once. The

sinker will pull the line off the rolling tin or keg and give you a marker which will tell you the place where you hit the fish. Unless the school is migrating or moving rapidly in pursuit of feed, you can return to the marker time and again and take fish. On a foggy day or when out of sight of land, this marker is most helpful.

Another simple way to mark the spot where you hit unseen fish is to throw over an old life preserver. This however will drift rather rapidly if there is a tidal current and therefore is not as reliable as the first marker described.

## CHUMMING

Chumming is a very effective if not always the pleasantest way of taking a good many fish. We have given a rather detailed description of chumming for tuna in the Nova Scotia rips, but there are many other forms of chumming which deserve mention.

Blue fishermen long ago found out that they could keep a school of these fish around the boat if they would fasten a meat grinder to the after end of the boat and grind the menhaden into an oily mass which created a slick on the water and attracted the ever hungry blues. Mackerel will respond to the same treatment, and you can use

most any oily fish such as menhaden, herring, mullet, sand-eel, mackerel or squid. This is also very effective in a tide rip where the slick will extend out behind the boat and attract the fish up-tide to the source of the tiny particles—which whet their appetite for more and urge them to swim toward the source of supply.

Weakfish, or sea-trout, fishermen employ the chumming method most successfully and use shrimps. This is rather an expensive method but it surely does work. Do not be too generous with the shrimps but trickle a few overboard every few minutes. After you have started this method of attracting weaks do not become discouraged and move too soon. Stick with it for awhile and if there are any fish in the vicinity you'll get your share. To be really successful you need a tidal current to carry the shrimps along before they sink to the bottom where they are able to hide. This method is employed to a great extent in Long Island Sound where it is not uncommon when the "weaks are in" to see so many boats tied up alongside each other that it almost looks as though you could walk across the sound by merely jumping from boat to boat. Where so many boats fish together, the chumming becomes sort of a community affair where you and your next-boat neighbor both help each other to get

more fish through the attraction of the chum from both boats. Incidentally, it is not "according to Hoyle" to anchor too close behind another boat in that boat's chum stream.

Bottom fisherman who try the same ground day after day can attract fish to their pet spot by taking an old burlap bag, filling it with several quarts of crushed clams, adding enough rocks to hold it in position and sinking it. Such a chum bag can be marked with a cork buoy. One old-timer always made his cork buoys very small so as not to announce to every casual passer-by his favorite fishing spots.

Tautog are another fish which can be chummed. As these fish frequent the deep holes right alongside the inshore rocks, a bag of half mussels or clams and half rocks—to hold it against the action of waves and tide—is good assurance of better luck next time.

Stripers can be chummed with shrimps in the same manner as weakfish, especially in the tidal currents of bays, inlets and rivers or marshy creeks. They can also be chummed in the surf; for this latter location a handful of squid thrown into the surf every fifteen minutes will often bring the fish in to where you are fishing. We know this one works because for the sake of experimentation we have tried it occasionally and found the cut pieces of squid in the stomachs of fish taken.

Some of those big stripers which come from the Rhode Island coast are taken from holes where the fishermen chum day after day. Back when the New Englanders used to build long walks out to offshore rocks, they chummed—believe it, if you can—with lobsters. But that was back in the days when lobsters were plentiful and could be bought for the munificent sum of \$1.50 per hundred.

If age gives a practice honor and respect, chumming should have it, for even at the old New England striped-bass clubs where fishing etiquette was rather strict, chumming was regarded as a necessity if a rod and reel angler expected to pick up more than an occasional straggler. Incidentally, in looking through an old book we find the following striped-bass record for one rod in one season “W. R. Renwick took 5,862 pounds of bass in one season with the biggest fish tipping the scales at 51 pounds.” Some fishing!

## BOAT REGULATIONS

Everyone who owns or hires a boat for salt-water fishing should be well acquainted with Federal regulations governing the equipment to be carried. These regulations are too long to give here in full, but we will mention a few of them and also advise that complete circular of rules

can be obtained from the Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., free of charge, of course.

Boats over sixteen feet in length must be registered and have the number of registration painted on each bow. This fact and many more rules are made known automatically to the man who owns his own boat, but they are apt to be overlooked by the outboard man or the man who occasionally hires a boat along the shore and uses his own motor. For example: Class One boats (under twenty-six feet) according to the Federal regulations must be provided with a whistle or other sound-producing mechanical appliance capable of producing a blast of two seconds' or more duration; shall carry life preservers or other device to sustain afloat every person on board and these must be readily accessible; must be provided with fire extinguisher of a type which has demonstrated its ability to "promptly and effectively" extinguish gasoline "while being navigated"; still again, if operated between sunset and sunrise, must have combination light forward and white light aft; must also carry two copies of the pilot rules, obtainable free from Collectors of Customs and local inspectors of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation.

These laws are actually good safeguards and

should be respected, if for no other reason than for your own protection and the evasion of the \$100 fine to which you are subject if you violate them. It is cheaper and much more economical to be informed.

## COMPASS

The man who thinks of going offshore in a small or large boat without a reliable compass is playing with the danger of not returning. Motor trouble can occur in combination with offshore winds and clouds to present a problem of which is East, West, South or North. Fog also can spring up with suddenness which would be unbelievable to the landlubber. It is better to have a compass—and to know how to use it if you are fishing offshore—even if you do not intend to be out of sight of land.

## DRINKING

Perhaps a fishing handbook should not contain sermons on drinking—nor do we intend to give one. But we do think that hard liquors in excessive quantities, hot sun, and the open ocean are a poor combination. We like a good drink as well as the next fellow but we believe in moderation when offshore where things can happen quickly to turn a good time into disaster.



On the other hand, a sufficient quantity of good cold beer is a good addition to the bait supply any day. Time enough to celebrate with the hard liquors when you get ashore.

## KEEPING FISH

In cold weather, keeping your catch of fish hard and firm during the day's trip presents no problem. But in the hot sun, it is a different story. If there is no ice aboard, the first thing to look for is shade. The second precaution is a wet burlap bag as a container for the fish, which should be dispatched quickly with a sharp blow over the head as soon as hauled aboard rather than be allowed to flop about in the cockpit. Throw a pail of water over the fish bag occasionally; evaporation will keep them cool. Some fish spoil more quickly than others, but all will be improved in flavor and firmness if the above simple directions are followed.

If you are surf fishing, you can keep your fish by covering them with seaweed. Better yet, dig a hole just above high-tide mark and put the fish down in the damp sand; a discarded jacket can be thrown over them to provide shade and additional coolness.

Bait can also be kept in better condition if you will remember to put it in the shade.

## HARPOONING

With salt-water sport fishermen becoming more and more interested in the future supply of big game-fish, there is a growing tendency to frown on harpooning swords and tuna. The amateur fisherman who wishes to help pay expenses of his boat may not agree. Personally we prefer to stick to the rod and reel. We mention this difference of opinion here only because it is a problem which should be considered and discussed. Seems to us that such great game-fish as the two mentioned above deserve the respect of rod and reel.

## SUNBURN

If you have one of those skins which just won't tan, don't be afraid that your companions will think you a sissy if you slap on a good dose of sunburn lotion or such other preparation to protect yourself from severe burning. There are no places in the outdoors where you can get a more severe sunburn than on the beach or open salt-water. We've seen plenty of hard-fisted, he-man commercial men use sunburn preventives—and wisely. If you do not wish to, or cannot conveniently procure prepared sunburn lotions, a mixture of olive oil (two parts) and vinegar (one part) will do very well. Or either one of these

alone will be helpful to keep the skin moist and help ward off that disagreeable overdose of sun. Milk will also be found very soothing if you get too much sun; we do not mean internal doses: soak a towel or handkerchief and apply to the burned part.

## STEEL RODS

There has been a general misunderstanding as to the care of steel rods after their use in salt-water fishing. *Do not* oil them; oil causes the salt to stick to the oily film, concentrate and dry, to the very definite damage of the rod. Best procedure is to wash the rods in fresh water after each trip and wipe dry.

## CLOTHING

A book could well be written on clothing for salt-water fishing, but we have room only to mention a few of the more important items. Starting with the foundation, one of the best all-round pieces of footwear for boat and shore fishing is sneakers or plain rubber-soled canvas shoes; they are light, economical, long-lived. For cold weather surf work, hip rubber-boots or even waist-high waders are essential; these with short waterproof surf pants (worn outside the boots) and topped with a parka jacket, also waterproof,

make one of the best mean weather combinations of clothing. These outfits have the nickname of "monkey suits" along the Jersey coast.

No matter what type of jacket you may be wearing, be sure that you have plenty of room about the arms and shoulders so that you have free use of these limbs in playing fish or in casting.

Best hat: one of those long-visored sword fisherman's caps for sunny weather; a sou'wester hat for rainy days—one with a wide brim in the back to keep the rain from running down your neck.

## COST OF TACKLE

In fishing tackle as in most every commodity that you buy, you get what you pay for. You can get a serviceable surf reel for five dollars, but the ten-dollar one is apt to more than doubly outlast it. In recent years tackle manufacturers have brought down the price of their products and at the same time improved them immensely—this goes for rods, reels, line and lures. If we were asked how much you should spend for tackle, we would not hesitate to tell you to buy the very best that you can afford; it will give you better performance plus the pleasure that there is in owning anything which is well made. Salt-water tackle is no more expensive than fresh-water

tackle, and decent surf, trolling, or bait-fishing outfits can be purchased at surprisingly low prices.

### RIGGING CUT BAIT

Trolling with cut bait is not practiced as much in northern waters as on more southern fishing grounds—but it is an effective method nevertheless, no matter where you use it. Such a bait should troll through the water smoothly, which cannot be done if the head end is allowed to flap. A sure way to control a cut bait properly is to run the hook through the strip just far back enough so that the head end of the bait strip (nearest the fisherman) comes even with the eye of the hook. A short length of wire can be fastened to the eye of the hook, run through the cut bait, and then run back up to take a twist around the leader. Simple enough. Some anglers allow this extra length of wire to remain right on the end of the leader, rather than snip it off.

### RODS

Fishermen who frequent the rocks are apt to give their rods more than average punishment. If you chip some varnish off your rod, be sure to rub the spot down with sandpaper or rotten stone as soon as the rod is thoroughly dry. Then put on

a protective coat of varnish (rod varnish is procurable at most all sporting-goods stores, in small convenient bottles). If the bamboo is exposed to dampness, it is apt to ruin a good rod in too short a time.

Varnish wooden and cane rods at least once a year—a good pastime during winter months. This greatly increases life of rod, preserves windings and keeps out dampness. Dampness ruins bamboo rods. Use fine-grain sandpaper to smooth out old varnish before applying new coat.

Do not twist rod when putting together or taking apart. Place hands as near section joints as possible and keep pressure off the guides.

Never put a damp or wet split-bamboo rod in its case (aluminum especially). Good split-bamboo rods are thoroughly dried, as moisture in a rod makes it “soft” and liable to “set” easily. Wipe off your rod and dry it thoroughly before putting away.

Never leave your rod assembled when not in use. Wipe ferrules absolutely dry of oil or grease before assembling rod again. Hang up by tip during winter.

Always look over your line guides. If they are rough or broken you can easily ruin a perfectly good line.

If you use steel rods for salt-water fishing, wipe them off with a damp cloth, then with a dry

one, after each day's fishing to prevent rust and corrosion.

Keep bamboo rods away from excessive heat, which is apt to warp or spoil them.

A really good rod combines the qualities of strength, resiliency and balance. The fun is spoiled if one uses a clumsy, stiff, unbalanced and heavy rod.

In assembling a fly rod, join the tip and middle joint, then the butt joint.

Don't be a fish hog.

If your rod is in a canvas case, do not tie string too tightly.

Too loosen tight joints of rod, heat female ferrule with lighted match.

## REELS

Every now and then someone comes along and says that vaseline is just as good as any reel oil or grease on the market. Don't believe them. The vaseline will work all right in hot weather, but when the day is cold, it will harden and do more harm than good. Those reel oils which are found in the catalog of practically every tackle manufacturer are made especially for reels—and we have yet to find any one of them which is not reliable.

Oil and grease your reel frequently. Use only high-grade lubricants.

Take care of your reel. Keep it free from sand and grit, and well oiled. A little care makes it last longer, saves disappointment and trouble.

Reel clamps are good precaution in heavy salt-water fishing—tuna, swordfish, tarpon, amberjack, sailfish, etc.

## LINES

With so many anglers using their 9 foot, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce fly rods and their regular fly reels, for light salt-water fishing, a word about backing is in order. We've heard of quite a few who have hit into some fish that would probably go seven or eight pounds, and found their reel spools suddenly bare when these fish made the first long run.

By all means put on at least twenty yards of backing, so that if you happen to be trolling a long line and hit a heavy fish, you'll have some reserve line left on the reel. Best by actual test for backing is 6 thread cuttyhunk; it takes up little room on the reel; it has plenty of strength; it will last much longer than the silk bait-casting line which so many fishermen have been using.

Where you join two lines, be sure that you



have a smooth connection which will not catch in the guides.

Fish both ends of your line. Take it off reel and reverse it when it begins to look worn. It may mean the catching (instead of the losing) of "that big one."

Test the end section of your line on each fishing trip and break it back to good line if necessary. The few feet at the very end get more wear and deteriorate more rapidly. Also always test your leaders.

Tie your line to axle of reel. If a fish takes all your line, you'll be glad you did so. Also your reel might come off the reel seat and fall overboard; if your line is tied, you recover it; if not, you've lost a good reel, and worse yet, perhaps a good day's angling.

In surf casting, the reel when full of line makes casting and thumbing easier; but do not have reel so full that line on spool touches cross-bars—allow about one-half inch clearance.

Take your lines off reels for winter, pack in airtight jars; this keeps them in fine condition.

Don't take a chance on old lines or old leaders,—they always seem to break when you hook the "big one."

## ON DRYING LINES

Too little is said about the harm that can be done to a good cuttyhunk line by leaving it in the tackle box after returning from a day's trip. Even though you may have used only fifty yards or so, if you have two hundred yards on the reel the water is very likely to have soaked through all this yardage. If you have a line dryer, so much the better; if not, stretch out the line across the foot of your bedstead, between two trees in the yard, or wind it around most anything that is clean, free from rust and allows the air to get at all of the line. Whatever you do, don't hang your line in the broiling sun to dry; it takes the starch right out of it.

## FEATHER JIGS

If there is an all-round artificial trolling lure for salt-water game-fish it is the feather jig. Blues, weaks, bass, tarpon, tuna, mackerel, and practically every kind of salt-water game-fish that swims will, upon occasion, hit these life-like lures. During the past few years there have been a great many improvements in these lures and there are probably at least fifty different sizes and shapes of them on the market. The feather part stays much the same, but different shaped

and weight heads give the angler a variety of actions to suit the most particular fish or fisherman. And they are reasonably priced—which always helps.

### SQUID: SUMMER OR WINTER?

From the commercial pound nets during the New England summer come tons of octopus-like creatures called summer squid. Mixed in with these in increasing number, as the season progresses, are the winter squids. One major difference in these two similar bait fish is that the winters have a heavy transparent backbone which looks like cellophane; the summer squids have not. It always seems to us that the summers are a bit oilier, but that may be our imagination. Of importance is the fact that some of the biggest bass taken out of the Cape surf have been lured to the steel barb with this bait. You can cut it up in strips; you can use just the head; you can use the whole works; take your choice, as it is one of the best bottom baits for stripers—the real old surf-hounds—that we know. The only trouble is that it also lures dogfish and skates with equal if not superior ability—but if these pests are around there's hardly a bait that they won't touch anyway. One of the largest bass that ever fell to our lot was taken on a whole squid which

must have weighed close to half a pound. And that fish also had three whiting inside of him.

## CHUBS

The salt-water minnow, fished alive, is a taking lure which has accounted for many a good catch. These are also known by the names of mummies, mummychubs, mummychaugs, etc. Once again, as in the case of shrimps, your dip net or a small seine with fine mesh will provide these in generous quantities at low tide from the tidal creeks and marshes.

Chubs will keep well if they are not piled on top of each other. We've kept them for days on a gunnysack which is water-soaked and laid on the cellar floor; sprinkle them morning and night and if you pick out the dead ones you can keep this bait for a week. While fishing, a flat-bottomed box or market basket (keep in the shade) is a good container, and some marsh grass or rock-weed will help. Sprinkle them once in awhile with a handful of water.

Hook this bait just under the skin at the dorsal fin. Be careful not to go deep enough to hit the backbone—this paralyzes the bait—and you can keep this lure alive on the hook for a goodly length of time.

Flounders, blues, weaks, and most of the

game-fish which have cannibalistic tendencies will take this lure readily.

## SHRIMP

Along the New England coast in the tidal creeks and often along the bay shores, you can catch little shrimp that average an inch to two inches in length and are one of the best baits for a number of salt-water game-fish. Small stripers, weakfish, flounders, tautog, and many other varieties will strike on this lure when others fail.

While you can buy shrimp at bait dealers, if you have a long-handled dip net with a fine-mesh bag (nearly as fine as mosquito netting) you can catch your own shrimp and save considerable money. Look for them under the edge of the creek bank, in little sandy coves; often they will be trapped in holes in the marsh at low tide, the best time to get this bait.

If you live near the shore you can keep a live-box, the best way to keep shrimp alive. You can make a box by building a wooden frame and stretching window screening over it. Have your box about a foot and a half long, about a foot deep and a foot wide, with a cover that will work easily on hinges on the top. If you're fishing from a boat, you can keep this live-box over the side and not worry about your bait keeping

fresh. If this is not a practical plan for you, you'll probably buy your shrimp from the baitman and find that he has packed them in sawdust and shavings. If you're keeping the bait overnight, put it down on the cool cellar floor or in the ice box. And while you're fishing, keep the box in the shade.

In weakfishing particularly, or if you're after small stripers in a tideway, you can often improve your fishing by throwing over a few shrimp from time to time. If there are any fish in the vicinity, this will be pretty apt to bring the gamesters up the tide to within reaching distance of your boat. A couple of quarts is sufficient as a rule for two men fishing for a day. Bait with three or four shrimps on your hook. This bait is not commonly used in surf casting as, being rather delicate, it will not stay on the hook.

## FIDDLER CRABS

The fiddler crab, a member of the land crab family, is found along the sandy spits and tidal marshes all the way from New England down along the Atlantic Coast to Texas. An odd little fellow, with compact body about an inch long, and carrying one huge claw which fits along his front, he lives in holes which are dug into hard sand or burrowed down under the roots of marsh

grasses. On bright days at low tide, it is not uncommon to see hundreds of these crabs lying out in the mud flats sunning themselves. At such times they are quite easily gathered by the bait man, although even when they appear in such numbers, you have to do some good leg work, for these small crabs can move rapidly in either direction.

When fiddlers can be found out on the flats the best way to fill up the bait bucket is to hasten to the edge of the mud flat and drop two boards, nailed together in the shape of a large V, in their path. In this manner you can sometimes trap a quart or two of them at a time by standing at the open end of the V and picking them up as fast as possible. The large claw can pinch uncomfortably but not dangerously so. Grab a handful of them quickly and release them just as quickly into the bait pail and you'll seldom get nipped. Incidentally, only the males have the large claw.

At other times, gathering these crabs is not so easy. Many a day we've had to take a sharp-pointed stick about a foot long, and walking softly—quite often working on our hands and knees—jab the stick down in back of the fiddler which you can see lying just an inch or so inside of his roundburrow, into which he fits like a finger in a glove.

For tautog, fiddlers are at times the very best

bait. Insert the hook in between the legs in either end of the body and bring the point of the hook out through the back. Be careful not to crush the shell.

## SAND-EELS

One of the greatest sights in fishing is to see great schools of seemingly limitless millions of small bait sometimes covering acres of water. The gulls attack this great "Sunday dinner" from above while game-fish rip into them from below until you wonder at the bountifulness of nature. Often the victim of this double slaughter is the slender pencil-like sand-eel or sand-lant, which grows to an average length of six inches, has a silver belly and green back.

Most all game-fish will hit this bait, which is particularly effective when trolled behind a spinner such as the Northern (which revolves on its own axis and is long and narrow). We've had great luck with stripers using this spinner with a sand-eel hooked right behind it with a double hook rigged so that one hook is through the head of the sand-eel and the other hook, about three or four inches behind is hooked through the body of the sand-eel in such a way that the whole business will revolve. Weaks and blues will also take this combination, as will mackerel, pollack, and others.



In some places the natives net these sand-eels for market and for bait. Try your local bait dealer, or if you live in a fair-sized coastal city, look to the fish stalls. It is not necessary to keep the sand-eels alive.

### FLY ROD FOR MACKEREL

The most exciting way to take mackerel is with bucktail flies and a fly rod. Hook into some of those two and three pounders and you have one of the fastest, gamest scrappers of the ocean on your hands. When the fish are schooling, don't drive your boat into or through the surfacing fish: circle them at casting distance and you'll not be so apt to drive them down. In addition to bright bucktails and streamers, the mackerel will strike at most any lively-acting fly rod lure. A fairly heavy leader is in order, and watch it for fraying, as the mackerel has needle-like teeth. There are some very fine light tinned wire leaders on the market and these are recommended.

The larger mackerel will also strike almost any of the standard plugs; red and white, silver, and pikie finishes seem most productive.

## FISH WEIGHT FORMULA

To get approximate weight of fish without use of scale, measure girth and length, square girth, multiply result by length, and divide by 800. For example, take fish 20 in. long and 10 in. in girth: square of girth, 10, equals 100,  $\times$  20 length equals 2000, divided by 800 equals  $2\frac{1}{2}$  approximate weight in pounds.

## SQUIDDING FROM THE BEACH

The metal squid has long been a fish-taker when properly used. We have watched many surf casters make beautiful long casts and not take fish, while the man fifteen paces away casts to the same ground and goes off the beach with stripers and blues that anyone would be glad to take home. Why the difference in luck?

It seems to boil down to a matter of speed. One of the most successful squidders we know is a man who reels that squid back to him on the retrieve as though his life depended on his getting it back as fast as it went out. In short, a fast retrieve is not a bad idea. In muddy waters, the Jersey boys often put a small spinner about a foot ahead of the squid. And a pork rind is always better than a bare-hook squid.

## TACKLE REPAIR KIT

Good articles to have in your repair kit for tackle:

1. Ferrule cement
2. 2/0 silk thread
3. Pliers—small size.
4. Medium-sized screw driver
5. Small file
6. Oil in small can
7. Punch awl, etc.
8. Small scissors
9. Roll of bicycle tape or adhesive tape (1 inch width)
10. Small carborundum stone to sharpen hooks, etc.

## TAKING RANGES

When fishing within sight of land, you can mark any good hole by taking ranges on the shoreline. For example, on your right you may be able to get a church steeple in line with a point or height of land; and far down to your left there may be a water tower which is in direct line with a tall pine or spruce; these two line-ups are the two converging sides of a triangle or V with the fishing spot at the offshore point of convergence or at the bottom of the V. Or, if the tidal currents permit, you can sink a weight and attach a line and buoy.

## MISCELLANEOUS TIPS AND HINTS

Most all wooden lures work better without a heavy leader, snap or swivel. Surface lures especially work poorly if weighted by heavy connection.

A good pocket or sheath knife is invariably of use—keep it sharp.

Carry a waterproof match-box.

Fish should be killed at once—they make better food and it is more humane.

Don't be afraid to change your flies, lures or baits during the day's fishing. Fish are temperamental; a lure that takes fish one day may not produce the next day.

On an extended fishing trip, a double set of rods, reels and lines, plus plenty of lures, may mean the vast difference between success and disaster.

Fishing open waters (lakes, seashore, deep sea) one often finds a pair of sun-glasses a real comfort. Polaroid lenses are tops.

To determine length of fish, many anglers mark the inches on the rod; measuring from the butt end, marks denoting from 6" to 10" will usually fall on the handle so that you do not have to mar the real structure of the rod. This same marking system can be used on the gunwale of your boat.

On an extended fishing trip, away from civilization, include a first-aid kit for small cuts, bruises, burns, etc.

Keep your hooks sharp, clean, and free from rust: they catch more fish and there's less chance of infection if you accidentally hook yourself.

Get some U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey charts of the bottom of the bay, inlet, or harbor from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.—they may point out some bars and deep holes which will mean better fishing.

Tidal currents affect many types of salt-water fishing. Get tide table from local paper or Almanac.

Natives of coastal towns can give you valuable local fishing information if you are friendly with them.

Dry your hooks and leaders before putting them away. Salt water can start rust surprisingly quickly.

Keep your fishing knife sharp.

Always double-check your gasoline and DRINKING water supplies, when you're headed offshore.

As wide a variety of bait as possible is always advisable.

There is no license required for salt-water

sport-fishing in most coastal states. California is one exception.

Open the first fish you catch and examine contents of stomach to see what the fish has been feeding on. This often enables the angler to more wisely choose the most "killing" lure or bait.

Old inner tube strips—or cork strips  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick in tackle-box compartments will keep baits from being marred by contact with metal. Some tackle-box manufacturers supply cork strips in tackle compartments.

Do not cast directly at a "rise"—several feet beyond or to one side will prove more productive.

A small bottle of iodine or Mercurochrome in your tackle kit is a good precaution in case of accident with a rusty hook or knife.

Keep your spinners and spoons bright—they are doubly effective.

Soak all silkworm gut leaders for at least ten minutes before using. Do not use gut when the bluefish are running.

Always handle small fish gently and wet hands before releasing them. A good sportsman always returns small fish to the water.

Pack your feathered lures in moth balls or similar moth repellent during winter months. Small cedar boxes with tight fitting covers are excellent; also airtight glass jars.

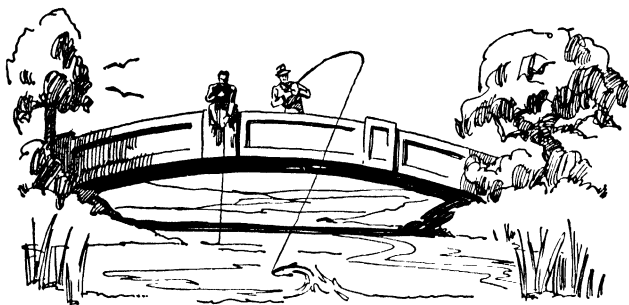
If your hook gets caught in rocks, log, etc., put strain directly on line, not on rod or reel.

Fish slowly, carefully and patiently.

In fly fishing, watch your back cast, so as not to catch your fishing partner's ear.

Treat your guide as you would your best friend, most of your success depends on him if you are in strange waters.

Know your fishing laws—that is, open season, bag limit and size limit—they are made for your own protection, to give you better fishing.



## Chapter 9

### CONCLUSION

THIS last chapter is being written in a small cottage atop a hill near the outer beach of Cape Cod. The location is actually symbolic of the purpose of this book. We sit facing the east as our fingers fumble over the keys. Through the French doors which form the eastern side of the living room we look down on a wild expanse of beach; there are no other houses, only an occasional ship beating out to sea to escape the dangerous shoals—the shoals which, in season, mean flounder, tuna, stripers, and blues to the salt-water angler. This fall, in late August, there will be a fleet of commercial boats working their seines around schools of mackerel which also visit the shoals after the bait fish. Here, in one



comparatively short stretch of ocean, is an example of what the salt-water angler, be he boat fisherman or surf caster, can find to satisfy his fishing urge. Wild as on the day this country was discovered, the white beach tapers off to the north and south with a beckoning call that challenges our best powers of concentration if we are to stay at our typewriter rather than take to rod and reel.

At our back—remember we are atop a hill whose only vegetation is a green carpet of upland cranberry dotted here and there with a few weather-stunted sand pines—down in the verdant valley, lie five ponds. We know them well and they have yielded—and still do—many a sizable smallmouth and white perch, not forgetting the five-pound pickerel which we caught in a high wind with no one to help handle the canoe. Actually we have not turned our backs either physically or allegorically on these ponds. They give us a feeling of security, a promise of fishing when conditions offshore are not right—and there's been many a morning when conditions for either fresh or salt water fishing were perfect, that we have stood undecided whether to turn east or west for our day's activities. This decision was not a vital one, as either alternative led to hours of tranquillity, dividends of peace of mind and health of body.

When you consider this book, think of this cottage atop the hill, a midway point between salt and fresh water fishing. Our purpose is not to permanently separate you from your favorite trout stream, or favorite bass pond; it is to present to you the *facts* about salt-water fishing. Anyone can write reams of romance about the beauty of either salt or fresh water fishing. We have tried to present only facts, information which would help both novice and veteran salt-water fishermen; facts which have been written before perhaps; but to find them you had to wade through thousands of pages of stories, yarns and anecdotes.

The reason for this A B C presentation of fundamentals is our sincere feeling that there are thousands of salt-water fishermen who have tasted only part of the joys of sea fishing. For instance, the tuna—swordfish—striped-bass enthusiast has too often overlooked the thrills of taking the smaller species such as kingfish, bluefish, tautog, weakfish, mackerel and even flounders. On the other hand, many anglers for the smaller species have hesitated to go out for the bigger species. We hope this book will serve these salt-water fishermen as a practical guide that will enable them to get every thrill the sea offers.

As for fresh-water fishermen, the sea has won

innumerable converts during the past few years. If *you* haven't wet some cuttyhunk in the briny deep, you still have fishing pleasures ahead of you that can be discovered only through your actual contact with this phase of angling. This book, then, is also a stepping-stone from the fresh to the salt water; an open door through which you can pass, to return to your fresh waters if the salt water does not please you—but there are few who do desert the salt water once they have tried it. Like the path eastward from our cottage, it can lead you confidently to the open beaches, to face with useful knowledge the long rows of blue waves which roll incessantly in from the open sea.

END



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